

CELESTINA.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

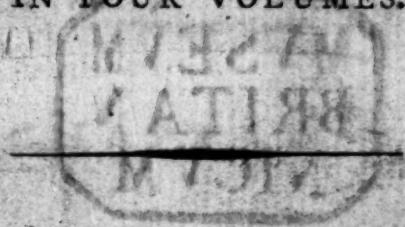
CELESTINE

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A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.



By CHARLOTTE SMITH.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

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ANNA MARIA

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BY CHARLES SMITH.

VOL. I.

PRINTED FOR T. CADDY, IN THE BRITISH
MUSEUM.

CELESTINA.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY was, at the age of thirty, left a widow, with a son and a daughter, of whom she was extremely fond, and to whose education she entirely devoted herself. George Willoughby, her son, had been placed at Eton by his father, but attended by a private tutor, a man of sense and learning, who was distantly related to their family. When he was about thirteen, a fever, from which he narrowly escaped, so injured his constitution, that his mother was directed by his physicians to take him to the South of Europe. Thither she and

her daughter, with Mr. Everard, accompanied him. A few months completely restored his health; and they then went all together to Geneva; where, after a short residence, she left her son to pursue his studies under the care of Mr. Everard; and with her daughter Matilda, then near eight years old, she fixed herself for some time at Hieres, on the coast of Provence; a town with whose beauty she had been much struck four or five years before, when, to divert her concern for the loss of her husband, she had made a tour of some months through France and Italy.

Matilda was placed in a convent, for the purposes of instruction; and there she became the playfellow of a little girl almost three years younger, who was known among the Nuns by the name of *la petite Celestine*. The fondness which soon subsisted between her and Matilda introduced her of course to Mrs. Willoughby, who was at first sight charmed with her beauty, and after a few interviews, so delighted with her infantine caresses,

refles, that she became as anxious to see her every day as she was to see her own child. Her countenance, with that blooming delicacy which the French distinguish by calling it "*le vrai teint Anglois*," had all that animation which is more usually found among the natives of the south of Europe; yet this spirited expression often melted into softness so insinuating, that it was difficult to say whether pensive tenderness or sparkling vivacity was the most predominant; or whether it was the loveliness of her little form and face, or the enchantment of her manners, which made her so very attractive, that the very servants who saw her with Matilda became so fond of her, as never to carry her back to the convent, after a visit to their lady, but with reluctance and regret.

The Nuns, however, with whom she lived, seemed, either from seeing her constantly, or for want of taste, to be quite insensible of perfections which won every other heart. They treated her sometimes

with harshness, and always with indifference; so that to be with Mrs. Willoughby soon became the greatest happiness the little Celestina could enjoy. Mrs. Willoughby found an equal pleasure in returning her affection; and was sometimes moved even to tears, when happening to care for Matilda, the other amiable child would approach as if to share her tenderness, take her hand, look innocently in her face, and say with a sigh, “*Helas! que n'ai je aussi une Mama man !*”

These artless expressions, and the coldness with which the sisterhood treated their infant pensioner, raised in Mrs. Willoughby a great desire to know to whom the child belonged: but every attempt to gain information was at first repressed by so much reserve, that she almost despaired of being gratified. At length however she received a hint, that by the skilful application of means equally potent in Courts or Convents, she might learn all the Nuns knew;

“*Alas! why have not I a Mama too!*”

and

and

and in consequence of pursuing this hint, she was informed, that the last Superior of the house, who had been dead two years, had received Celestina into it when only a few months old, as a child whose birth it was of the utmost consequence to conceal: that only the Superior herself, and her Confessor, who was also dead, had ever known to whom she belonged; every trace of which secret had by them been so carefully obliterated, that after the decease of both, every attempt at discovery had been ineffectual. It was believed that a considerable sum of money had been received as the price of secrecy, and as a provision for the child; but it had never been carried to account, or any part of it appropriated to the use of the community in general, who now consequently murmured at the necessity they were under, as they said, *par charité, et pour l'amour de Dieu*,* to support *la petite Celestine* for life: but they added, that as soon as she was old enough to take

* Through charity, and for the love of God.

the vows, she must become a Nun, and fill one of the inferior offices of the convent, since she had no friends or money to pay for being on a higher footing.

The pity excited by this account, added to the sensibility with which, infant as she was, she felt her own situation; her tender attachment to her benefactress, and to Matilda, and the sense and sweetness visible in all she said and did, procured for her, in the tender and generous heart of Mrs. Willoughby, an interest little short of what she felt for Matilda herself. Every hour increased this interest; till after a stay of eighteen months at Hieres, during which she had seen her almost every day, she found, in reflecting on her departure, that she should be really unhappy the rest of her life, if she returned to England, and left this amiable child to a fate so melancholy in itself, and so unworthy of the promise of perfection given by her infancy. Having once entertained the idea of taking her to England, it soon became too pleasing

to be relinquished. There were however great difficulties in the way. Though the community complained of Celestina as a burthen to them, they made, as they declared, a point of conscience, not to part with her to an heretic ; and the more solicitous Mrs. Willoughby became, the more they declaimed against the sin it would be, to hazard the soul of *la petite Celestine* for the sake of any worldly advantage. While the matter was yet in debate, George Willoughby and Mr. Everard, who had been sent for that the whole family might return to England together, arrived ; and the latter finding how much Mrs. Willoughby desired to become the sole protectress of the little orphan, prevailed with Father Angelo, the present confessor, to remove at once all the scruples he had been instrumental in raising : in a word, Mr. Everard used the argument to which Monks, in despite of their professions of poverty, are not more insensible than the rest of mankind ; and Mrs. Willoughby having left a

CELESTINA.

certificate of her having taken Celestina out of the convent, a promise to educate her without influencing her to change her religion, and to provide for her, together with a direction where she might, in case of enquiry, be found, was permitted to carry with her, from Hieres, the lovely little French girl, who was from that hour put on an equal footing with her own daughter, and whom she seemed as tenderly to love.

After an absence of between three and four years, Mrs. Willoughby and her family returned to England; where to all her friends, who were generally struck with the beauty and elegance of her adopted child, she related, without reserve, the little history of their accidental attachment.

George Willoughby, now in his seventeenth year, was sent to Cambridge: his tutor retired to a small living, which had fallen near his estate in the West of England, since his absence, and to which his mother, as patroness in his minority, had

had presented this excellent and amiable man.

Mrs. Willoughby usually passed the winters in London; where masters of music, drawing, dancing, and languages, attended her two girls, for so she equally termed Matilda and her little friend:— their summers were divided between public places and Alstone (or Alvestone, as it was spelt), an estate between Sidmouth and Exeter, of which her husband had been so fond, that he had hurt his fortune by the large sums he had expended on its improvement. This attachment George seemed to inherit; and in compliment to him, his mother always passed the vacations there: Willoughby himself having no pleasure so great as in talking and thinking of the happiness he should enjoy, when he should become master of Alstone, and see his mother and sister, of whom he was extremely fond, settled there with him for the greatest part of every year. Mrs. Willoughby, whose love for him might

have been said to border on weakness, if it had been possible to discover any excess in the attachment of a mother to a son so uncommonly deserving, had always encouraged the inclination he had from his infancy betrayed for this his paternal seat: though his little projects often gave her pain; for she knew, what she had with more tenderness than prudence studiously concealed from him, that his father's affairs were at his death so much embarrassed, as to render it doubtful whether a minority of near thirteen years would so far clear his estates, as to enable him at the end of that period to reside in this favourite place, with the splendour and hospitality for which his ancestors had for centuries been eminent. The last Mr. Willoughby had indeed continued the same line of conduct in the country; but his manner of living in town had been quite unlike that of his prudent and plainer ancestors; who had but just recovered his estate, when it was transmitted to him, from the injuries it had

had received by their adherence to Charles the First; during whose unfortunate reign, they had sold some part of their extensive possessions, and had been plundered of more. His grandfather and great-grandfather had nearly retrieved the whole of the estate round Alverstone, where they piqued themselves on losing none of the family consequence; but the manners of the times in which he lived, and a disposition extremely gay and volatile, had led the last possessor into expences, which, if they did not oblige him to sell, had obliged him to mortgage great part of this, as well as all his other estates; and being charged at his death with twelve hundred a year to his widow, and the interest of ten thousand pounds given to his daughter, they slowly and with difficulty produced, under the management of very careful executors, little more than sufficient to pay such charges, and the interest of the money for which they were mortgaged.

Mrs. Willoughby however was unwilling to interrupt the felicity of her son's happiest hours, by representing to him a dreary prospect of the future; especially as she thought that future might, as it advanced, become brighter; and that it was possible all his gay visions might be realized. He had a great uncle, far advanced in life, and very rich, who, though the late Mr. Willoughby had disengaged him, might, she thought, through mere family pride, give to the son, what he had often declared the father should never possess. Her brother, Lord Castlenorth, was the last male of his illustrious race: he had only a daughter; and an increase of his family becoming every day more improbable, he had concerted with his sister, even while George (who was younger than his daughter) was yet a child, how the family might be restored by a union of its two remaining branches.

The good sense of Mrs. Willoughby had not entirely saved her from family pride;

pride; and this project, which the situation of her son's fortune rendered doubly desirable, had by degrees taken such possession of her mind, that nothing would have made her more unhappy, than suspecting it might not take effect. After her return with her family from France, she had an interview with her brother, Lord Castlenorth, who was then in England (though his health occasioned him for the most part to reside abroad), and it was then agreed with him, or rather with Lady Castlenorth, whose will was his law, that if the young people liked each other, of which they hardly suffered themselves to doubt, the match should take place as soon as young Willoughby became of age, who was then to assume the name of Fitz-Hayman, and in whose favour, when united with the sole heiress of the family, there was little doubt of procuring the succession to the title. Willoughby, who was yet ignorant of this proposed arrangement, had accompanied his mother in her visit: but far from feeling

ing any partiality for his cousin, he had hardly taken any notice of her, and had passed all those hours when common civility did not oblige him to attend the family, in wandering with his tutor over the extensive domain belonging to his Lordship's magnificent seat. He seemed indeed much more sensible of the charms of Castle-north, which was the name of his uncle's house, from whence the title was derived, than pleased with either its present or its future possessor. Mr. Everard, who anxiously watched every emotion of his mind, saw this, and he saw too that his pupil was of a temper which would ill bear to be dictated to in a point so nearly connected with his own happiness. He prevailed therefore, with some difficulty, on Mrs. Willoughby, not to explain her views till nearer the period when she meant they should be perfected; and they left Castle-north without Willoughby's having the smallest suspicion of them, or carrying away any other idea of his cousin, than that

she

He was a tall, fat, formal brown girl, whom he soon forgot and never desired to remember. His uncle's complaints and quack medicines—his long lectures on genealogy and heraldry—had tired him; and Lady Castlenorth's dictatorial manners offended and disgusted him. He told Mr. Everard, that the only hour in which he had felt any pleasure during his abode at their house, was that in which his mother fixed the time of departing for her own. Thither he returned with redoubled delight, after the restraint he had felt himself under at Castlenorth; for there lay all his plans of future felicity, and there were Matilda and Celestina, his two sisters, as he always called them, who seemed equally dear to him.

In a few months he went to Cambridge; and Mr. Everard, who afterwards saw him only for a few days in the year, had no longer the same opportunities of judging of his sentiments. He still however had interest enough with Mrs. Willoughby, to prevail

prevail on her to delay any intimation of the intended alliance. Lord Castlenorth, his lady, and daughter, were now in Italy, and were to remain there till within six months of the time fixed among themselves for the marriage of the latter: but above a twelvemonth before the arrival of the former period, Mr. Everard died. Mrs. Willoughby and her family lost in him the sincerest friend and most capable monitor: a loss which greatly affected Willoughby, as well as his mother, who sent for her son from Cambridge on that melancholy occasion. Thither he had hardly returned, before the uncle of his father, on whom he had great dependance, and who had not long before taken him into his favour, and promised to make him his heir, died without having altered his will, and endowed an hospital with the estate which he had really meant to give his nephew, had not death overtaken him before he could conquer his habitual indolence, aggravated by

*of a singular and divine power from the
heavenly*

the feebleness and imbecility of eighty-seven.

This disappointment was severely felt by Mrs. Willoughby, who apprehended that not only the immediate but the contingent interest of her son might be deeply affected by it: she doubted whether it would not change the intentions of her brother in his favor; but after some weeks of uneasy suspense, she received assurances from Italy that those his intentions and wishes were still the same.

Mrs. Willoughby, though reassured in this respect, was still in very low spirits, and felt every hour, with increasing severity, the loss she had sustained in such a friend as Mr. Everard, whom she lamented indeed publicly, but still more bitterly in private. Her constitution, naturally very delicate, began to decline under the sorrow which oppressed her. Matilda, then about sixteen, was the only person about her who seemed insensible of the alteration which now made a slow but very evident progress

gress in her looks and manner. Her countenance was still pleasing and interesting, but very languid; her eyes had lost their fire; and she grew very thin. Her amiable manners remained; but all her vivacity in conversation was fled. She no longer enjoyed society, of which she had been so fond: but she still went into company, because Matilda, now of an age to enter into all the gaieties of high life, did indeed engage in them with an avidity which her mother was too indulgent to repress, though she could not approve it. Sometimes however she suffered so much from crowded rooms and late hours, that though she did not even then complain, her physicians insisted on her forbearing so continually to hazard her health. Matilda, who was very uneasy if long kept from company, was then put under the care of some of her mother's friends, and the task of attending on her beloved benefactress fell entirely to the lot of Celestina, who was never so happy as when employed

employed in it, and who now having just completed her fourteenth year, surpassed, in the perfections both of person and mind, all that Mrs. Willoughby, partial as she had always been to her, had ever supposed she would attain.

Above two years passed away : Willoughby pursuing very regularly his studies at Cambridge ; Matilda pursuing as regularly every amusement that offered itself ; and Celestina, careless of all that has usually attractions for youth, devoting her whole time and thoughts to Mrs. Willoughby, who without saying any thing of what she felt to be inevitable, was gradually sinking into the grave.

This conviction made her determine to disclose to her son, when she next saw him, her purpose in regard to Miss Fitz-Hayman ; but it was a resolution she could not bring herself to make, without infinite regret ; for in giving her reasons for wishing this alliance, it was necessary for her to open to him the real state of his fortune ; and indeed of

of which her tenderness, in this instance perhaps injudicious, had hitherto kept him in ignorance. The longer this affectionate mother thought of the pain she should thus inflict on her son, the less she found herself able to undertake it: she therefore determined that Mr. Dawson, who had been employed many years by his father as steward and manager of the estates, should, under pretence of consulting him on his affairs, now that he was of an age to direct in them, disclose to him their real situation. For this purpose he went to Cambridge; and there this unpleasant explanation was made to Willoughby: who learned, that his father, towards the latter end of his life, had mortgaged above a third of his property for nearly its value; that what remained was not only encumbered by heavy debts, which were to be discharged out of it, but had a charge of twelve hundred a year, his mother's jointure, and was to pay his sister ten thousand pounds, with interest till she married—

burthens which so diminished the income, as to make it impossible to save any thing during his minority, and left him no prospect of ever enjoying his paternal estate unembarrassed, but by an opulent marriage. Though Mr. Dawson had, with as much caution and tenderness as possible, opened to Willoughby the real condition of his affairs, the young man, of warm passions and keen feelings, could not hear such a mortifying account but with the extremest pain and humiliation. Unable to remain tranquilly at Cambridge, he immediately set out for London, and asked of his mother a farther explanation; as if unwilling to receive from any hand but her's a blow so cruel, which seemed to destroy for ever all his favourite hopes.

Mrs. Willoughby had ever been so far from suspecting that her son loved money, that a tendency to carelessness in that respect had sometimes alarmed her: she was therefore extremely surprized at the eagerness of his enquiries, and the evident anxiety

anxiety and concern he expressed at his disappointment. But having convinced him that all he had heard was but too true, and recovered from the agitation into which the necessity of giving him so much pain had thrown her, she seized the opportunity, while his mind seemed to turn with uneasy solicitude towards the means of redeeming his patrimony, to suggest to him the plan she had so long considered as infallible—“ My dear George,” said she, “ there is one way by which all this may be repaired ; and your estate, devolving to you from a long line of ancestors, of whom any man might be proud, may not only be repaired but increased, by an alliance of which an ambitious man may be still prouder. My brother, Lord Castlenorth, is the last male of a line distinguished since the conquest ; your cousin, his only daughter, will inherit his fortune ; the titles die with him. It is equally natural therefore for him and for me, to wish that you, my son, in becoming the husband

of

of my niece, may possess the estates and honours of my family, which on such a union would be easily obtained ; and that in you may be revived, or rather perpetuated, the family of Fitz-Hayman. I did not intend to have named this to you till your farther acquaintance with your cousin, who returns to England in the course of the next summer, should have made it on your part a measure of inclination ; for from all the accounts I have had of her, she is very amiable and highly accomplished : but my uncertain health, and the near approach of that period when you become master of yourself, have at length determined me to tell you my thoughts in a matter, on which the prosperity of your future life depends. I need not say, George, that seeing it in that light, there is nothing in this world so near my heart as its completion."

Willoughby, whose mind was contending with the various emotions this discourse of his mother's had raised, remained silent and

and confused. He changed colour; he sighed, as if to throw off the unexpected pressure on his heart; and Mrs. Willoughby, who saw with concern that he entered not into the project with the alacrity she had expected, began again to describe to him not only the numerous advantages which must follow the marriage, but to repeat all she had heard, and more that she had imagined, of the perfections of Miss Fitz-Hayman.

Willoughby however appeared rather to be musing than attending to almost the only conversation from his mother that he had ever thought tedious. When she seemed to have exhausted the subject, he still paused a moment; then taking his hand from his forehead, he asked his mother—whether she thought Miss Fitz-Hayman as lovely as Celestina?

“ As lovely as Celestina !” replied Mrs. Willoughby in great and apparently painful surprize—“ How came Celestina to occur to you ?”

“ Nay,” answered her son, attempting to

to appear indifferent—I know not how, unless because she is the prettiest young woman I have lately seen."

" Surely you do not think of Celestina," reassumed Mrs. Willoughby with encreased emotion—" surely you are not imprudent enough to entertain an idea of her otherwise than as a sister. There are objections—insuperable objections. For God's sake, George, let me be assured that you will never again think of her."

" Dear Madam," returned Willoughby with some quickness, " that is really more than I can promise. How is it possible for me to assure you, with any hope of my being able to keep my word, that I will not think of a beautiful and interesting object, which, whenever I am with you, is continually before my eyes."

" Well then," said his mother with yet more chagrin, " since it is so, you will compel me to remove her where—"

" Surely," cried the young man, eagerly interrupting her, " that would be

VOL. I. C. very

very cruel—very cruel as it would affect Celestina, and very unnecessary as it relates to me; for I shall now be very seldom at home; and I can, without any danger of breaking my word, assure you, that nothing will ever make your son forget the duty he owes you, or hazard giving you pain. I am very sorry I named Celestina, since you seem so uneasy at it. Think of it no more I beseech you; and continue to love, as you used to do, my adopted sister, or I shall never forgive myself for my inadvertence."

Willoughby then, without staying to talk over farther the proposed alliance with Miss Fitz-Hayman, hurried away; and that he might avoid all farther conversation with his mother, he staid out to supper that night, and immediately after breakfast the following morning returned to Cambridge; telling her, as he took leave, that it would be time enough to talk over the business she had opened to him when the parties to whom it related were in England, but that

she might assure herself that *her* happiness was always nearer his heart than his own.

This was the first time in his life that he parted from Matilda and Celestina without saluting them both. When breakfast was over, and he had taken leave of his mother, he kissed his sister as usual, and was approaching Celestina, who already held out her hand to him, when catching his mother's eye, who seemed to look at him reproachfully, he blushed, and only bowing and wishing Celestina her health till he saw her again, he hastened to the door, and without venturing even to look at her, as she followed him thither with his mother and sister, he mounted his horse and disappeared.

Hurt cruelly at this behaviour, (which from the very different judgment she had formed of it, had yet more alarmed his mother,) Celestina could not repress the tears which she felt rising to her eyes. Mrs. Willoughby stood at the door till her son turned into another street; and was then

going to her own room, when Celestina, from an emotion she could not command, caught her hand and burst into tears: and for the first time in her life, her benefactress, instead of soothing her, received her mournful caresses with repulsive coldness, and almost without speaking to her left her. Matilda was as usual engaged to a morning concert, and had neither time nor inclination to attend to the concern of Celestina or the displeasure of her mother, which indeed she either did not see, or seeing, reflect upon. Poor Celestina therefore, who never suspected the real source of Willoughby's affected coldness, nor could imagine why his mother, who always found pleasure and comfort in her company, should now fly from her, concluded she had offended them both, and passed the morning in tears. At dinner, however, Mrs. Willoughby, as if conscious of her injustice, behaved to her with even more than her accustomed tenderness. After they had dined, as Matilda was still going out,

out, their reading went on as usual. Mrs. Willoughby took no notice of the swollen eyes and half-stifled sobs which still agitated the gentle bosom of her young friend; but without naming the cause, she seemed solicitous to remove every remaining uneasiness; and by her easy and affectionate manner Celestina became convinced that concern for her son's departure, and not anger towards her, had occasioned the coldness which had so much alarmed her; and her soft heart was thus restored to tranquillity.

C 3 CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

THOUGH Mrs. Willoughby took infinite pains to appear cheerful, and to hide the progress of the illness which was undermining her constitution, her efforts to appear better than she was, could not deceive her physicians; who now proposed that she should go either to Lisbon or the South of France. This prescription however she endeavoured to evade, by assuring them that travelling so late in the year would infallibly injure rather than be useful to her; but she promised to follow their advice early in the ensuing spring, and to pass the winter at Bath. Thither she repaired in November, with her daughter and Celestina, to remain some months. Willoughby declined joining them at the end of term, contrary to his usual custom:

he

he informed his mother, by letter, that he had made a party with some of his friends to pass the Christmas vacation at Alvestone, and that on their way back to Cambridge they would stay two or three days at Bath.

Matilda in the mean time, who frequented every public amusement, was become a Bath beauty, followed and admired by that description of men whose opinion is considered as decisive in the world of fashion. Miss Willoughby was always most elegantly dressed; for to be so was the principal study of her life. She was always with people of rank, was of an honourable family, had a good fortune, great connections, a pretty person, and was, to use the common phrase, "extremely accomplished;" that is, she knew something of every thing, and talked as if she knew a great deal more. Among the men of ton who contributed to feed her vanity and raise her fashion, was Mr. Molyneux, the only son of an Irish Baronet, of whom the bounty of a grandfather had made him in-

C 4 dependent.

dependent. With an handsome figure, a good fortune, and a title in reversion, Mr. Molyneux was every where courted and admired; and by lounging about from one public place to another during the summer, and passing his winters, whether in England or Ireland, in the very first world, he had acquired so high a polish, that his manners and his dress, his expressions, and even his air, were copied by all the rising beaux. His understanding was just of that level which rendered him capable of being pleased with this species of fame; and having no great warmth of heart, he had no other motive of choice in marrying than that which arose from his solicitude to maintain his importance as a man of taste in the fashionable world. He had indeed no great inclination to marry at all; but his father, now far advanced in life, pressed him so earnestly to take a wife, and he was so besieged by the kind entreaties of two maiden aunts who had a great deal to give him, that tired by

their

their importunity, and willing enough to oblige them in a matter which was indifferent to himself, he at length, in the thirty-fifth year of his age, fixed on Miss Willoughby, as a pretty woman, well born, and above all—very much “the rage.” Proposals from such a man were of course accepted by the mother and the daughter; Willoughby was pleased to hear his sister was likely to be so well established; and in a few weeks it was settled that the wedding was to take place in February, when Mrs. Willoughby and her family proposed returning to London.

When Willoughby came with his Cambridge friends to Bath, to fulfil the promise given to his mother, he was introduced to his future brother-in-law. But a very short observation convinced him that they were not designed for friends; and that however closely they might be allied, Mr. Molyneux would still be to him a mere acquaintance. Willoughby was eager in the pursuit of knowledge; his mind, already

highly cultivated, his heart warm and open, and his manners, with all the ingenuous simplicity of youth, had the natural good breeding which only good understanding can give. Whatever was the real character of Molyneux, it was no longer distinguishable under the polish of fashion; to obtain which, alone, seemed to be his study; all his ideas of good and evil, of right or wrong, centered there. If books had been the object, in the circle where he moved, he would have qualified himself to talk upon them; but as they were not, his reading never extended beyond a short novel, a pamphlet, or a newspaper. To strike out something new in a cape or a carriage, something which the great would imitate and the little wonder at, was half the purpose of his life: to have any affections was reckoned extremely vulgar; and as he really had as few as was well possible, it cost him but little trouble to divest himself of them entirely, and to obtain that *sang froid* which is the true criterion of

of a man of fashion. It is absolutely necessary to be in the House of Commons. A seat therefore he had for a Cornish borough ; where he gave a silent vote to the Minister for the time being, and neither cared nor enquired whether it would benefit or injure his country, about which he was perfectly indifferent. Yet with a mind occupied almost entirely by trifles, his handsome figure, and his affluent fortune and fashionable manners, gave him that consequence which is often denied to virtues and talents. His air was that of a man of rank ; and the calm coldness of his manner gave an idea of latent powers, which he was supposed to be too indolent to exert.

Matilda, in many respects, seemed to be his very counterpart. Since they had been so much together, she had adopted his thoughts and caught his phrases ; and her brother, though he did not think her by any means improved by the imitation, allowed, that if similarity of character gives happiness in marriage, his sister had a prospect

pect of being completely happy. But when he looked at Celestina, which he avoided doing as much as possible, he saw in her improvements so different from those of Matilda, that all his resolutions to wean his mind from dwelling on her perfections faded before her. She was now in her seventeenth year, with a face and form which instantly attracted the eye, even before the beauties of her understanding had time to display themselves. These latter she never obtruded on observation; but was as silent in company as Matilda was talkative and gay. The loveliness of her form therefore it was that immediately struck the young companions of Willoughby; who both, the instant they quitted the room where they had been introduced to Mrs. Willoughby, her daughter, and Celestina, asked of Willoughby farther particulars of his adopted sister, declaring they had never seen so charming a girl, and expressing their wonder at the calmness with which he had frequently spoken of her. This conversation was so uneasy

uneasy to him, that he could with difficulty conceal his vexation ; and as his college friends from time to time renewed it, that circumstance, added to the pain he felt in forcing himself to behave to Celestina with cold and distant civility, shortened his visit to three days ; at the end of which time he took leave of his mother, who again mentioned to him her views in regard to Miss Fitz-Hayman ; to which Willoughby, who was less than ever inclined to listen to her on that point, returned vague but gentle answers ; escaping from it as well as he could without giving any thing like a promise, he hastened back to his books, among which he hoped to lose the idea of Celestina, which he could not cherish but at the hazard of rendering either his mother or himself unhappy.

He promised to attend in London his sister's wedding, which was now to take place in a month, and for which preparations were making : but about a week before the day fixed for Mrs. Willoughby's

departure

departure for London, an inflammation on her already injured lungs seized her so suddenly, that there was only time to send an express to Cambridge for her son, who, notwithstanding his utmost expedition, arrived hardly an hour before his excellent parent expired.

As she had before taken leave of her daughter and Celestina, the greater part of that melancholy hour was given to her son, ever the object of her tenderest affections. What passed was known only to Willoughby, who, the moment his mother was no more, gave way to such an excess of sorrow, as deprived him for some hours of his senses; and when they were restored, the sight of Matilda's calmness, who did not seem to him to feel half the concern she ought to do, and the perfect composure of Molyneux, who evidently felt nothing, seemed to him so insupportable, that he shut himself up in his own lodgings and refused every offer of consolation. Though Celestina had long apprehended that the

life

life of her beloved benefactress was in a much more precarious situation than she could herself allow, or than Matilda was willing to see, yet this cruel and yet unexpected blow quite overwhelmed her: but Willoughby, as unable to bear the sight of her grief as displeased at the stoical composure of his sister, fled with equal solicitude from both of them; and having given directions for removing the remains of his mother to the family seat at Alvestone, he hastened thither himself to receive and pay them the last offices; which being done, he wrote to his sister, recommending it to her to return to London with Celestina, and to send for an elderly maiden relation to remain with them till her marriage, which the death of her mother had of necessity postponed: he promised to see her in town in the course of a fortnight, there to execute, as far as he could, those parts of his mother's will which demanded immediate attention.

In

In pursuance of these directions the two young ladies set out for London, Mr. Molyneux following them in his own carriage. The sight of the house which had now lost its mistress, threw Celestina into all those agonies which the recollection of past happiness and past kindness, from a lamented friend, gives to a heart so tender and so sensible as her's; while Matilda, who shed a tear or two from feeling something of the same sensation, presently recovered herself, and received her lover, who waited upon her immediately after his arrival, without betraying any symptoms of emotion which could give him cause to apprehend that the repose of his future life might suffer any interruption from the too exquisite sensibility of his wife.

At the time he had appointed, Wiloughby rejoined them. Though he now saw them with less emotion, his melancholy seemed to be deeper than at first. With his sister he avoided all conversation that was not absolutely necessary; with Celestina he was even more reserved, and never,

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as in their happier days, brought his books and sat with her, or sought her conversation as his greatest pleasure. He contrived indeed, under pretence of having affairs to settle abroad, to see her only at dinner or supper; and frequently, under pretence of illness, absented himself from both.

After having been with them a few days, during which this reserved and altered behaviour almost broke the heart of Celestina, who seemed to have lost, by the death of the mother, the friendship of the son, he sent up one of the female servants to her room, when she retired thither after breakfast, to beg to speak to her in his sister's dressing room. This formal message, so unlike the brotherly familiarity with which he used to treat her, cut her to the heart, but she immediately attended the summons.

Willoughby bowed on her entrance. They both sat down: Celestina trying to check the tears she found rising to her eyes, and the sighs which swelled her bosom. His looks, so pale, so changed from what they

they were, his attitude, his silence, all contributed to distress her; while he seemed collecting fortitude to go through the task he was to execute. After a short pause, he took from his pocket book a paper, opened it, and counted out three Bank notes, of six hundred pounds each, on the table; then advancing towards her with them in his hand, he presented them to her, saying in a voice which he did not intend should falter—“ There, Madam, is the sum which Mrs. Willoughby—which my mother, by her will, bequeaths you, and which, as her executor, I most willingly pay you. Allow me to wish you every happiness—and—” He would have gone on: but Celestina, who had arisen on his approaching her, turned pale and sat down. “ You are not well,” said he: “ the recollection of my mother—” “ Does indeed overcome me,” answered Celestina. “ *I* have lost a mother—and a brother too—Yes! I have lost all!”

“ Pardon

"Pardon me, Miss de Mornay," replied Willoughby, "I meant not to distress you—and—"

"Miss de Mornay!" repeated Celestina, again interrupting him—"Miss de Mornay and *Madam*. Ah! Mr. Willoughby! those appellations of distant civility convince me that I have no longer a friend—a brother—"

"Nay, but my dear *Madam*, be not, I beseech you, guilty of so much injustice. Let me execute the directions given me by my dear deceased mother, whose orders you know were, that within two months after her decease these should be put in your possession." He then again offered the notes to her.

Celestina put forth her trembling hand; but instantly withdrew it.—"I cannot take the notes indeed, Mr. Willoughby," said she. "What can I do with them? I, who am a minor, a stranger, an orphan; who have no relation, no guardian—no friend! I did indeed hope," continued she, her eyes filling with tears from the

the recollection of her forlorn situation—
“ I did indeed hope that you, Sir, would have had the goodness to have kept it for me till—”

She stopped from inability to proceed.
“ Till when, my dear Miss De Mornay?” cried Willoughby with eagerness he seemed endeavouring to check.—“ Certainly I would if it had been in my power; but it was my solemn promise to my mother to pay it into your hands, or into those of any person whom you should appoint.”

“ And cannot I name *you* as being that person?”

“ Pardon me, dear Celestina,” answered Willoughby, speaking hastily, as if fearful of relapsing into the fondness he once felt, and desirous of quitting a painful subject—“ pardon me, it is not possible for me to be of that service to you which most assuredly I should rejoice to be if—”

“ Dear Celestina!” replied she. “ Ah! Willoughby! I have seen for many, many months, that I am no longer your once

dear sister Celestina. Call me Madam and Miss de Mornay, as you did just now, rather than flatter me with the sound, when the sincerity of your regard is gone! Well Sir! since, for reasons which perhaps I ought not to penetrate, it is no longer in *your* power to act by me as a brother and a friend, I will no farther intrude on your kindness than to beg you will tell me how I ought to place the provision thus made for me by my benefactress."

Willoughby half stifled a deep sigh; and after a moment's pause said—"I would advise you to place it immediately on government security, in the names of two persons on whom you can rely, till you become of age. Dawson, who was, you know, always employed by my mother, is more conversant than I am in these matters. If you will give me leave I will send him to you; and I am convinced you may safely trust to his honor and probity."

He then again offered the notes he had in his hand. Celestina took them in silence, being

being in truth unable to speak ; and turning hastily away, he reached the door, where he stopped as if irresolute ; then in a low and faltering voice he said—“ As I shall probably see you no more, unless in mixed company, before I return to Cambridge, I cannot take this my last leave without assuring you, that however circumstances may, alas ! *must* prevent my shewing it, my heart can never be indifferent to the welfare—to the happiness of my sister Celestina.”

There was no time for the trembling auditor to answer this address, to reflect on the peculiar way in which the whole was delivered, nor on the strong emphasis laid on the words *may* and *must* ; for he was in a moment at the bottom of the stairs, and Celestina, who remained in breathless agitation, with the door of the apartment still open, heard him a moment afterwards call to his servant for his hat, and the door of the house presently shut after him. She then sat down and burst into

into tears, for which she was, on a little reflection, ashamed to assign a reason even to herself. " For what do I weep," said she—" or why am I disappointed? What did I expect? that Willoughby was attached to me? Surely no! for he never gave me any reason to imagine it, and of late has sedulously avoided me, as if he supposed me weak and vain enough to misinterpret the friendship and regard he used to shew me. Let me, while he does stay, convince him that he may, without prejudice to his views in regard to Miss Fitz-Hayman, still treat me and consider me as his sister, and that I never thought of being looked upon otherwise, which surely he must have fancied, or he would not behave to me as he does!" Another flood of tears relieved the swelling heart of Celestina after this soliloquy. She then dried her eyes, dressed, and acquired so much command over herself as to meet Willoughby at dinner without betraying any symptoms of the uneasiness and mortification

fication she still suffered; and when the next day he took leave of her and Matilda, she bade him adieu with the same apparent calmness.

Three months passed, and the time fixed for Matilda's marriage arrived. Willoughby then wrote to desire his sister would excuse his devoting only a single day to her on that occasion: he would attend he said to give her away, but was obliged by indispensable business to return immediately afterwards to Cambridge. Matilda remarked how strange it was that her brother, who had now been some time of age, was so bigotted to his books that he could not leave them for longer than a day even on such an occasion; but his pleasures and her's differed so greatly, and their tempers and pursuits were so opposite, that no sympathy had for some years existed between them; though on the part of Willoughby there was always great affection for her; and on her's, as much regard for her brother as it was her nature to feel

for any body. This difference of sentiment and inclination however had insensibly so far estranged them from each other, that the company of Willoughby was oftener a restraint than a pleasure to his sister, and therefore as she felt little regret in losing it, she thought not much about his motives for depriving her of it.

The evening before that on which Matilda was by special licence to be married to Mr. Molyneux, her brother arrived: but instead of the gaiety the occasion required, or even that which had formerly been usual with him, his melancholy and regret seemed to have become habitual by indulgence. He hardly spoke: and when he did, it was with such languor that Matilda might with reason have been alarmed for his health, if she had been capable of attending seriously to any thing but herself. Celestina, to whom he behaved with more distant reserve than ever, could not be insensible or silent about a health and life which ought she thought to be so precious

cious to his sister and his friends, and therefore she spoke to Matilda, when they retired after supper, of the change so evident in her brother. Matilda answered coldly that it was owing to nothing but his burying himself as he did among his books, and losing all relish for other company. "I wish," added she, "that these Fitz-Haymans were come over, that he might live in the world again, and be like other people, which he must be when he is married." Celestina could not heartily join in this wish, and even doubted whether Willoughby ever would be quite like those who were called "other people" by his sister. She dropped the conversation however, and retired to her pillow with more solicitude for the happiness of Matilda, which was to be determined the next day, than Matilda was capable of feeling for herself. The image of Willoughby, such as he was a few years before, was strongly painted by her imagination: she ran over all their former early pleasures; their walks,

walks, their reading, their gardening together at Alvestone while yet children ; then Willoughby, such as he now was, so amiable yet so changed, obtruded himself on her mind ; and being unable to look forward with any degree of pleasure, she felt with redoubled sorrow that those days of innocent confidence and ingenuous tenderness, could never—never return !

CHAPTER III.

WHEN the party met the next day, every body had left off their mourning, and every face appeared cheerful but those of Willoughby and Celestina: the latter, when gaily rallied by the friends of Mr. Molyneux, endeavoured to recover her tranquillity; and as to Matilda herself, she gave away her hand with as much ease as if it was a matter of course. Molyneux received it with equal composure; and as soon as they were married, they sat out, accompanied only by Celestina and Mr. Hamilton, a near relation of the bridegrooms, for an house which Mr. Molyneux rented in Hampshire. Willoughby saluted his sister; and as he handed her into the coach he again wished her happiness. It was impossible to avoid doing the same

as

as Celestina passed him, but he faltered, and could hardly articulate his compliment, which while he was yet tremulously attempting to express, holding one of her hands between his, Mr. Hamilton, who had been detained by giving some orders to his servant, came up, and taking her other hand said—“Come, come ! as you don’t go with us, Willoughby, the care of this lady devolves upon me, and I shall not allow these sorrowful partings to make her as melancholy as you are yourself all her journey.” Celestina was then unresistingly led away ; while Willoughby, who followed her to the coach door, found at that moment his heart assailed by pangs it had never felt before, but which he knew too well to be jealousy in its most corrosive form. As the coach drove away, he stood looking after it ; now repenting that he had not accompanied his sister and her husband into Hampshire, then determining to order his horse and follow them ; now detesting Hamilton, of whom he had never thought before, and then resolving to conquer a

passion which a thousand circumstances made it the height of folly to indulge. The coach which contained the object of it was already out of sight; but Willoughby still stood on the spot from whence it had been driven, so lost in the indulgence of these sensations, that he forgot where he was, and was roused from his reverie only by the arrival of a friend with whom he had made an appointment to go in his chaise part of the way to Cambridge.

This friend he was ashamed to disappoint, nor could he form any excuse to account for his suddenly changing his mind and following his sister, whom he had steadily declined to accompany under pretence of urgent engagements. While he yet debated, the chaise was ready, and with an heart torn with contending passions, and a mind intent only on Celestina and the advantage Hamilton enjoyed of being so long with her, as during the stay of Molyneux in Hampshire and in the tour they were afterwards to make, he proceeded,

absent,

absent, silent, and miserable, to the end of his journey.

Celestina with equal oppression of spirits was yet more unfortunate, because she was afraid of enquiring too narrowly into the source of her concern, nor did she dare to indulge it, but was compelled to assume cheerfulness very foreign to her feelings. Mr. Hamilton, who had never taken much notice of her before, now seemed disposed to amuse himself by coquetting with her; but she had so little inclination to encourage him, that, as he was too perfectly a man of the world to give himself much trouble about any woman, he soon left her to her own amusements. In a few days after the bride and bridegroom arrived at their house, it was filled with company; and Matilda, wholly occupied with parties all the morning, and play in the evening, had never time to think of Celestina, who soon found herself neglected by the only person whom she could now call her friend; and the disappointment which still

sat so heavy on her heart—the failure, as she believed, of Willoughby's regard—was now embittered by the coldness or rather carelessness which she experienced from his sister.

In a few weeks a party was made to visit Plymouth and the Western bathing places. Celestina went with them as a matter of course, but she felt herself dwindling fast into the humiliating character of a dependent companion, and sometimes fancied that her place in the coach might have been occupied by another more to the satisfaction of her friend: yet Mrs. Molyneux was never rude to her; and sometimes related (with apparent kindness) how her mother had adopted her from a convent, and that therefore she ever should consider her as her sister. Celestina always felt herself more mortified than gratified by these relations; and by degrees they became so irksome to her, and the whole style of conversation among Matilda's friends so little to her taste, that she insensibly acquired

an habit of absenting herself, and of living very much alone either in her own room or in the walks which wherever the party fixed she contrived to find, and whether the image of Willoughby, such as it had been at a very early period of her life impressed on her young heart, incessantly accompanied her. This was more particularly the case when in the course of their tour Mr. and Mrs. Molyneux undertook to shew their friends Alvestone, where Willoughby had ordered every thing to be prepared for their reception as if he had been himself there. Matilda re-visited this beautiful place with no other emotions than those of gratified pride; but on Celestina it had a very different effect: this was the scene where the happiest hours of her life had passed. The dressing room where they all used to assemble when the only parent she had known was it's mistress, brought her forcibly to the recollection of Celestina. The chair on which she used to sit, the furniture which she had worked

herself, and the pictures she had collected, were so many memorials on which Celestina could not look without recollecting a thousand instances of her general goodness or her particular tenderness, and feeling with bitter regret the irreparable loss she had sustained. The park and the gardens too furnished her with many sources of painful contemplation, mingled however with a degree of melancholy so soothing, that nothing would have been to her so great a punishment as being obliged to exchange it for the desultory and uninteresting conversation, which, in the little time spared from the card table, engaged the party within the house.

The party however troubled themselves very little with her; and she was left at liberty to retrace the walks which she had so often traversed with Willoughby while Matilda leaned on one arm and she on the other, and to gaze on the prospects which he, while yet a boy, had pointed out to them with so much pleasure. She remembered

bered all the proposed improvements of which he delighted to talk. A rapid stream bursting from the hollow of a rocky common that bounded the park, and made its way through it, had been by the former Mr. Willoughby widened at a great expence, and now fell several feet into a vale which he had at a still greater cost, floated with water. On the sides of this fall, which had been formerly part of the common, grew some old oaks and beech, and among these the mountain ash and weeping birch had been planted and now spread their various foliage and half concealed the water that dashed from rock to rock between them. These steep banks had ever been the favourite seats of Willoughby; who there sitting between his two sisters, and holding each of their hands, had very frequently amused himself with projects to encrease the roar of the water or deepen the shade of the wood that fringed it's side. This place was the daily resort of Celestina during the week she remained at Alvestone,

and

and thither she usually carried some of those books from the library that she remembered Willoughby had read to her. These were principally poetry: and the perusal of them, the place, the season, a thousand tender remembrances enforced by each, served at once to soften and depress an heart naturally tender and affectionate, which, deprived of almost every other object of it's regard, cherished with painful pleasure the idea of Willoughby, such as he once was, and when they passed here so many innocent enchanting hours. But when she imagined that in a few months he would probably re-visit these scenes with another, with Miss Fitz-Hayman, who would then be his wife, and that she herself should never again be admitted to wander among them with their beloved master, sick despondence took possession of her soul, and it was with difficulty after these reflections that she could reassume courage enough to mix with the friends whom Mr. and Mrs. Molyneux had assembled

bled to listen to insipid pleasantry and attend to uninteresting conversation.

But whatever regret Celestina felt in recollecting past hours of felicity which she knew could never return, she left Alvestone with extreme reluctance, and had it been proper, or possible, would most willingly have remained there alone. In quitting it never to return, she felt almost as much concern as she had done when in taking leave of Willoughby she fancied that she should see him no more till he was married to Miss Fitz-Hayman.

Of that match Mrs. Molyneux now very frequently spoke as a matter entirely settled, and Celestina no longer doubted of it's speedy completion. This circumstance, (which gave her uneasiness that she was unable either to repress or entirely to disguise), the increasing indifference of Matilda towards her, and the constant succession of company in which Mr. and Mrs. Molyneux lived, united to raise in her a wish to quit them; and finding that the hints

hints she gave of such a disposition were received with perfect carelessness, and that such a removal would probably not be objected to, she every day grew fonder of her project, and during their stay at Sidmouth fixed on a cottage about four miles from it, where she thought she might reside, if not happily at least in that quiet obscurity which her circumstances rendered prudent, and her distaste to the world in which she now lived, pleasant. She found that she could there be accommodated with board and lodging, and there she would now have remained if Mrs. Molyneux had not, when she understood her project, insisted on her returning to London with her after finishing their tour.—“ Go with me however,” said she, “ the rest of our journey, and till we meet the Castlenorths, who are to be in town in October; and then if you have this rural passion still so strong upon you, you shall take your own way.” Though there was little appearance of affection in this invitation,

tation, Celestina thought she ought not to decline it, and therefore, though meeting the Castlenorts was what she most solicitously wished to avoid, she determined to go with her friend to town, that she might not give her any pretence for forgetting her entirely, or incur the censure of the world for leaving abruptly the only protection she could claim.

C H A P-

CHAPTER IV.

THE return of Mr. and Mrs. Molyneux to London was postponed from time to time till November. Lord Castlenorth had been too ill to set out on his journey to England at the time he proposed, and the family meeting which was to settle all that related to the marriage was now delayed till after Christmas. Willoughby however testified no impatience: he had promised to meet his sister and her husband in town on their arrival; but instead of doing so, he sent such an insufficient excuse as must have appeared very strange to Matilda had she thought much about it; but immersed in pleasures and pursuits of her own, she gave herself very little time to reflect on her brother's conduct, and was far from supposing that he absented himself

self because he could not see Celestina without encreasing and confirming a passion which he had many reasons against indulging, and of which he was determined to cure himself by absence and reflection. The negociation with his uncle, which had been carried so far by his mother, he neither declined nor forwarded ; but suffered it to remain nearly on the footing she had left it, flattering himself that by the time Miss Fitz-Hayman arrived in London, he should have so far conquered his early attachment as to have an heart as well as the hand, which he had promised to his mother's entreaties, to offer her.

Though his endeavours to forget Celestina had hitherto been quite unsuccessful, he had however acquired so much resolution as to determine not to see her, till the arrival of his destined wife, and the final settlement of every thing that related to his marriage, should put it out of his power to break the engagement he had made to Mrs. Willoughby in her last hours, and to sacrifice every thing to his passion. The struggle

struggle he underwent however was dreadful, and by continually repeating to himself the necessity there was for his forgetting Celestina, he so accustomed himself to think of her, that he in reality soon ceased to think with interest of any body else; and though he endeavoured to persuade himself that he should have courage to acquit himself of what he tried to think his duty to his family, to his mother's memory, and himself, there was no intelligence he so much dreaded as that of the arrival of his uncle's family in England.

Celestina on her part, passed her time in a way very unpleasant to her. Mrs. Molyneux, now mistress of herself, plunged into unceasing dissipation; and as Celestina was frequently desired to accompany her, and always to make one of the parties she collected at her own house, she found that the expences of dress alone would greatly exceed the income of her little fortune, and that she should soon exhaust it to live among people whose society gave her no other ~~nothing but~~ ^{nothing but} ~~but~~ ^{nothing but} pleasure, ~~nothing but~~ ^{nothing but} elegance.

pleasure, and who for the most part considered her only as she was capable of filling up a table or the corner of a coach when it was vacant. Her quickness of apprehension and extreme sensibility made her too frequently remark, that the table or the coach might in the apprehension of Matilda always be as well, and sometimes better filled; and these observations, together with her growing dislike to Mr. Molyneux, and the people with whom he associated, who not unfrequently treated her with the impertinent familiarity which they thought themselves at liberty to use towards Mrs. Molyneux's *companion*, renewed, before she had been six weeks in town, her wish to quit them for ever, and to enjoy in her own way the small independence given her by her lamented benefactress.

The certainty that Miss Fitz-Hayman was so soon to become the wife of the only man for whom she ever had felt the least degree of partiality, hastened the execution of her project. She now heard every day
of

of the great beauty, the extraordinary accomplishments, and the immense fortune of the future bride, while Mrs. Molyneux was exercising her fancy on the equipages, and other preparations which were so soon to be on foot for the wedding of her brother; a subject that Celestina always listened to with impatience, which, though she with difficulty concealed it from others, she was painfully conscious of herself. The eternal harangues of Mrs. Molyneux on taste and elegance had always been fatiguing to her, but she was more than usually disgusted when the purpose of these lectures was to decide upon or to describe the bridal fineries intended for Willoughby and Miss Fitz-Hayman.

A letter now arrived from Lady Castlenorth announcing her intentions of being in London with her Lord and her daughter the following week; and at this intelligence Celestina, no longer hesitating, wrote to the person near Sidmouth, to whom she had spoken the preceding summer; and

finding

finding she could be immediately received at the lodging she had then looked at, she packed up and sent by the waggon the small collection of books given her by Mrs. Willoughby, which with her cloaths and the legacy vested in the funds, were all her worldly possessions ; and that evening after supper, when by a chance very unusual with them Mr. and Mrs. Molyneux were without company, she declared her intentions of going into the country the next day.

Mr. Molyneux, twirling about a wine glass and humming a tune, seemed to attend very little to the information ; his wife, after hearing it with almost equal indifference, said—“ I cannot imagine, my dear, why you think of going into the country now, or what you propose by it.”

“ Nothing more,” replied Celestina, piqued at the coldness of her manner, “ than to accustom myself at once to a mode of life which my narrow fortune ren-

ders, I do not you do not consider that I do not

ders, if not absolutely necessary, at least highly prudent."

"Prudence," cried Molyneux with a smile which Celestina thought a contemptuous one, "is an acquisition very unusual at eighteen: but a girl of spirit, with so pretty a person as your's is, should be rather ambitious than prudent, and should try to make her fortune by marriage instead of hiding herself in the country. Numberless young women about town have done extremely well, who, without any compliment, have not had your share of beauty."

"Very possibly, Sir," replied Celestina; "but unless my mind was disposed as their minds probably were, which I believe it never will be, the personal advantages you so flatteringly allow me, will never obtain the affluence you think so desirable."

"What do you mean to say?" answered he. "What! do you pretend that you would not marry as other women do for money or title?"

"For neither, upon my honor."

"Pooh!"

“ Pooh ! I thought you had more sense ; but since it is so, my dear Celestina, I wish you all possible felicity in your new plan of pastoral amusement, and doubt not but that some tender and amiable Philander, in the shape of a young west country curate, will enable you to realize to your heart’s content all your ideas of disinterested love and rural happiness.”

Molyneux then sauntered away, and his lady looking in a pocket mirror, and picking her teeth with the nicest care, took up the argument.

“ You know Celestina that I have the greatest regard in the world for you, and that I have argued with you for ever about this nonsensical resolution, which I cannot imagine what put into your head. You will be tired to death child, in the country at this time of the year. However if you will go, do stay here at least till after my brother is married. We shall have half the world with us then, and I shall want you for twenty things.”

At

At the mention of Willoughby's marriage, Celestina, though so much accustomed to hear of it, changed colour, and her voice as well as her look might have betrayed the uneasy sensations she felt, if Mrs. Molyneux had not been always too much occupied by herself to attend very narrowly to another.

"Pardon me, dear Madam," said Celestina, "I certainly cannot be wanted on that occasion. You will have so many other friends about you that I shall not be missed; and I have no right, indeed I never had any, to be upon an equality with the persons who will then be assembled about you. Let me therefore find my own place in society, and learn at once to submit to it."

After some other conversation, Celestina, still unwilling to appear in the slightest degree ungrateful for past kindness or too impatient of her present situation, agreed to stay another week in town; and retired to her own room relieved by having thus declared

declared her intentions, and fixed the time when her present uneasy state of dependence would be at an end.

But of this delay she repented, when the next day notice was received by Mrs. Molyneux of the arrival of Lord and Lady Castlenorth at their house in Grosvenor-street. Mr. and Mrs. Molyneux instantly waited on them; the next evening they were to return the visit in form; and thus Celestina was compelled to be present at a meeting she had been studiously endeavouring to avoid.

Lord Castlenorth was one of those unfortunate beings, who have been brought up never to have a wish unprevented or a want ungratified. He was born when his father was far advanced in life, the sole heir to one of the most ancient* families and opulent fortunes in England; and was

* Fitz-Hayman, Earl of Gloucester, came in with the Conqueror, the heiress of which family married a natural son of Henry I. by Nest, daughter of Rhees Prince of South Wales.

of so much consequence, that till he was near eighteen he was hardly ever suffered out of the sight of his father. He was then released by death from the officious affection which had long been very troublesome to him; and with every thing on his side but a good constitution, he sat out on a wild career of pleasure, in which, before he had materially hurt his fortune, he was stopped by the apprehension of declining health. His figure was one of those which look as if

“ The blasts of January would blow them thro’ and thro’;”

and the irregularities of his life had so much impaired a habit naturally weak, that at thirty he was a mere shadow, and then was told by his physicians that he must resolve on a residence of some time in the South of Europe if he would avoid going to that country “ from whose bourn no traveller returns :” to which having an invincible aversion, he lost not a moment

ment in complying with their advice. But as he soon recovered some degree of health, he grew every day less attentive to injunctions they had given as to his manner of life; and relapsing into his former indiscretions, he was again reduced to extremities, and when very little hope of his life remained, was recommended by one of his medical friends in London to put himself under the care of Dr. Maclaurin, a Scottish physician, who had been settled for two or three years at Naples with his wife and family.

There he was treated with the most assiduous attention, not only by the Doctor himself but by Mrs. Maclaurin and her daughter, then near thirty, who was so reasonable as to allow herself to be five and twenty. She was tall, and had a tolerable face, with which her ambition to be admired, suffered her not to be content in it's natural state. She had been brought up to attend most sedulously to her own interest, and to pursue the establishment of her

fortune by marriage: she had therefore learned early to fawn and flatter; and to the cunning of her mother united some portion of the abilities of her father. Mrs. Maclaurin was one of that species of beings who are by courtesy denominated good sort of women. All her virtues were negative; and of the few vices she had it in her power to practise, she contented herself with malice and defamation, and even in those she never indulged herself unless very certain that the objects were incapable of retort and totally defenceless. She had now however but little opportunity of gratification; for though she had lived three years in Italy, she understood not a word of the language, and her attempts to amend the world being therefore made, in one not understood by those in whose favor they were exerted, were very little comprehended, and of course failed of affording her much satisfaction. Her talents being thus perforce confined to her own household, had taken another turn, and had been applied

plied to the acquisition of money, and of securing a good match for her daughter.

The Doctor, though really a man of some abilities, had not hitherto been successful enough in his profession to be enabled to give her a fortune: the project of marrying her well was equally interesting to him; and among the various patients he had received into his house since he resided at Naples, the elder son of a very opulent merchant in London, and an old Baronet, who had several daughters older than Miss Maclaurin, very narrowly escaped her multiform attractions by the impertinent remonstrances of their families.

Lord Castlenorth had no relations but Mrs. Willoughby, who was very unlikely to interfere in any matrimonial project; he had besides a much larger fortune, and was of a much higher rank, than any of those for whom the family of Maclaurin had intended the honor of their alliance; but the very circumstances which rendered the prospect of such a marriage most alluring,

seemed to preclude the probability of success.

Among the few things Lord Castlenorth had learned of his father, the principal was to value himself on his descent; and, as far as related to his own family, he was a genealogist almost as soon as he could speak. As he advanced in life, he found himself of so little consequence for individual merit, that he was compelled to avail himself of the names of his ancestors, from whom only he derived any importance at all; and the "puny insect shivering at a breeze," swelled with conscious pride when he recited the names of heroes from whom he had so woefully degenerated.

This pride of ancestry was now the most distinguishing feature in a character where it appeared with the greatest prominence, from the faintness and insipidity of the other traits, for being no longer able to pursue the dissolute manner of life which he had adopted rather from fashion than in-

clination,

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clination, he had now in other respects no character at all.

Miss Maclaurin, who began to study him as soon as he was received by her father, soon saw it, and saw it with dismay; for she supposed that it would be an insuperable bar to those hopes, which she thought she might otherwise very reasonably entertain.

The Doctor however had too many resources to be so easily discouraged. He fabricated with admirable ingenuity a story, of which he justly supposed the ignorance and indolence of his patient would prevent his ever detecting the falsehood. He said that he was really a Hamilton, and had taken his present name in compliance with the whim of a distant relation, who had on that condition given him his property. The only objection being thus removed, Miss Maclaurin had a fair field for her attractive talents; and they were so effectually exerted, that in about five months after Lord Castlenorth's reception into the family

of Maclaurin, he became himself a member of it, and Miss Maclaurin returned to England as his wife.

That her father might still retain, without too scrupulous an enquiry, his relationship to the house of Hamilton, and that her mother's coarse figure and coarser manners might be no disgrace to Lady Castle-north in the sphere where she now prepared to blaze, she prevailed upon them to retire to their native country on a pension which there gave them consequence: while her Ladyship, who while she was Miss Maclaurin had nothing doubted of her own eminent perfections, was now so convinced of their irresistible power by their having thus established her in a situation so much above her hopes, that she thought herself born for the government and amendment of the world, and from that period had been advancing in arrogance and ostentation till the present hour; when at the age of fifty, with an unwieldy person and a broad face, where high cheek bones appeared

emulous

emulous of giving some protection to two grey prominent eyes, whose lids seemed inadequate to shade them, Lady Castlenorth was as well by her rank as her talents and her travels, qualified in her own opinion for universal dominion. Not content therefore with governing her Lord with despotic sway, (which indeed saved him the trouble and probably the disgrace of governing himself) she assumed towards the rest of the world a style equally dictatorial. Her opinion was strongly enforced on every topic that came before her; in private anecdote, in public debates, in literature, in politics, in fashions, she was equally omniscient; and whether the conversation ran on taxes or on taste, in laying out grounds or on setting out a dinner, in making a peace or a poem, she understood all, descanted on all, and could decide on all, in a way from which few of her auditors had at the moment courage to appeal.

By the side of this majestic figure, her Lord, the descendant of the old Earls of Gloucester, of Welsh Princes and English Kings, sunk into insignificance. His diminutive figure, now shrunk by age and sickness, his sallow and withered countenance, and his feeble step, formed a decided contrast to his robust and Juno-like lady, by whom he suffered himself to be led about, without ever pretending to dissent from her opinion, unless in matters of heraldry or genealogy, where he still ventured to take the lead, in which she was for the most part willing to indulge him. His Lordship's ill health had made him also conversant in physic; a science in which, notwithstanding her hereditary claim to it, Lady Castlenorth had not shewn much disposition to contend with him: but as there was more trouble and disgust than honour to be obtained by a constant attention to it, as applied to his real or imaginary complaints, she had very frequently delegated her authority, and at length quite relinquished her knowledge, to a relation,

relation, who being a widow (and said to possess a pretty fortune though nobody ever knew where it lay) now about six and forty, had with infinite philanthropy dedicated her days to relieve the infirmities of her fellow creatures without any other advantage than that of being received in turn at their houses. She knew every receipt, whether of diet or medicine, that could be named, as preventative or cure; understood the preparation of every quack remedy, and the qualities of all the drugs of which they are compounded: nor was she less acquainted with the human frame; and would in all companies give the history of any complaint to which it is subject in technical terms, to the wonder of some and the terror of many hearers. Such were the manners of Mrs. Calder; and her person was one of those, which but for their singularity, nobody would ever recollect as having seen at all. She now resided almost constantly with Lord and Lady Castlenorth, to both of whom she had contrived

trived to render herself necessary. With them she had been abroad, (where she had greatly improved her stock of knowledge, and had actually written a treatise on the goitres of the Alpine peasants, which Lady Castlenorth was polishing for publication,) and she was now of the party who were assembled at Mrs. Molyneux's; where the last but not the least in consequence appeared also—the destined bride of Wiloughby.

The claim of this young lady to eminent beauty, or to any thing more than a barely tolerable person, would certainly not have been allowed, had she not been heiress to the illustrious house of Fitz-Hayman; but the escutcheon of pretence, which she had a right to, seemed to give her a pretence also, to much of what nature had very scantily allowed her. She was as tall and almost as large as her mother, whom she greatly resembled. Her complexion was brown, and as her hair was not dark, the want of contrast produced a muddy and heavy effect,

effect, which nothing could have relieved but two dark eyes, whose powers were assisted by a greater quantity of rouge than unmarried ladies are even by the French customs usually allowed. What expression they naturally had however was not pleasing, and what they borrowed from this addition added more to their fierceness than their lustre. They were eyes of “high claims and expectations,” which demanded rather than solicited admiration, and signified pretty plainly the real disposition of a character, inflated with ideas of it’s own consequence, and considering more than half the world as beings of another species, whose evils she could not feel for, because she was placed where it was impossible she could ever share them.

To the personal arrogance of her mother, she added the hereditary pride of her father: the first had taught her that hardly any man could deserve so perfect and accomplished a creature; the second, that it was more desirable to unite herself with

Willoughby

Willoughby, and thus continue her own illustrious race, than lose or share her consequence by marrying a nobleman of superior rank. Some degree of personal partiality too, contributed to render this resolution more pleasing to her; for though she had not seen her cousin for between three and four years, his graceful and beautiful form when he left Eton, with his dark auburn hair flowing over his shoulders, had made a very lasting impression in his favor.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.

SUCH was the group, which, at a very late hour in the evening, entered the dining-room of Mrs. Molyneux, who, with her husband and Celestina, received them in the usual forms. Lady Castlenorth, as usual, took the lead in conversation, having first satisfied herself that Mrs. Molyneux had sent for Willoughby, and heard her assurances that he would certainly be in town the first moment he possibly could after hearing of the arrival of his noble relations.

“ What sort of taste, my dear,” cried her Ladyship to Mrs. Molyneux, “ is this apartment fitted up in?—Is this the present style in England?—I think it extremely ugly.”

This was trenching on Matilda in a very tender point. Taste was her reigning foible;

ble; and the house had, on her recent marriage, been fitted up under her directions at an immense expence. To have her elegance called so abruptly in question, therefore, was very far from being pleasant, and she answered coldly—"I am sorry you dislike it: it is, I believe, the newest style of doing rooms. To what does your Ladyship object?"

"Oh, to the whole. These sort of papers are unclassical and glaring: I don't like the colour of your furniture neither."

"Nor I," interrupted Mrs. Calder; "tis terrible for the eyes: does not your Lordship find it dazzling and inconvenient even by candle-light?" She then began to explain the effect of glaring and strong colours on the visual orb, when Lady Castlenorth, who had no intention to throw the conversation into her hands, turned abruptly towards Celestina, of whom she had hitherto taken no notice, and said, looking steadily at her while she addressed Mrs. Molyneux, "That, I think, is the young woman whom

your late mother *said* she took out of a convent somewhere in France, is it not?" Mrs. Molyneux answering in the affirmative, Lady Castlenorth, her eyes still fixed on the object of her enquiry, said, "Aye, I thought I recollect her:—Umph!—and so Mrs. Willoughby provided for her, did she?—Well! and is she to live on with you, as she did in your mother's time?"

"Only a few days longer, Madam," said Celestina, who had borne very impatiently this rude and unfeeling scrutiny; "I am then going to reside entirely in the country."

"I am glad of it, child," replied the lady; for I always consider it as a misfortune when girls are educated above their fortune, and introduced into a style of life they have no pretensions to. Indeed, I gave Mrs. Willoughby my opinion about you repeatedly in your infancy. I did not then know that her circumstances allowed her, in justice to *her husband's* children, to provide so amply for another. However, though

though it was a great deal for her to do, it is not by any means a fortune to authorise you with prudence to continue to live about town. You took, I think, your Christian name from the order of Nuns among whom you were reared ; and your surname—I mean the name they gave you—it has escaped me ?”

“ My name, Madam,” said Celestina, whose tears were restrained only by indignation, “ is De Mornay.”

“ True ; I recollect it now. I remember I enquired of Mrs. Willoughby, whether when they gave you that name they had any reason to fancy you any way related to the family of the famous du Plessis Mornay ; but I think she told me no, and that you received that appellation because the Superior to whose care you were entrusted had some fanciful partiality to the name.”

To this no answer being given the conversation took another turn, but was still engrossed by Lady Castlenorth ; while Mrs.

Molyneux,

Molyneux, wearied to death, proposed cards, and making a table with the noble pair, Mrs. Calder, and her husband, she sat down herself by Miss Fitz-Hayman, and endeavoured to enter into conversation with her.

Miss Fitz-Hayman however, who never loved her cousin because she had heard her reckoned handsome, and who was out of humour to find that Willoughby was not yet arrived, though there was barely time for him to have come express, received all her advances with more than her usual haughty indifference; and while she answered in short sentences or mere monosyllables, she now examined with looks of dislike the studied but becoming dress of Mrs. Molyneux, now, with yet more unpleasant expression, glanced with averted head, from the corners of her eyes, on Celestina, who without any study at all was infinitely more beautiful.

These scowling looks of mingled malignity and contempt, added to the behaviour

of

of Lady Castlenorth towards her, had by this time rendered the room so disagreeable to her, that she left it as soon as she could. A loud rap at the door however soon after announced the arrival of other visitors; and some ladies coming in who had finished their circle of visits for that evening, Mrs. Molyneux, as tired of the daughter's silence as she had before been of the mother's loquacity, proposed a table at *vingt un*, which Celestina was immediately desired to join.

The party were hardly placed at it, before Mr. Molyneux was informed by his gentleman that Mr. Willoughby was below and asked to speak to him. "Desire him to come up," replied he, without any seeming consciousness of the formidable nature of the interview he was to go through.

"He is in boots, Sir," replied the servant, "and desired me to say that he is going immediately to his lodgings."

"Oh but we shall not let him go," said Molyneux. "Do Mrs. Molyneux,"

continued

continued he, addressing himself to his wife, "do go down and bring up this brother of yours."

Mrs. Molyneux rose and left the room. Lady Castlenorth, still appearing to attend to her game, turned her fiercely-questioning eyes, first on her daughter, who might have blushed if her complexion had been calculated to shew the suffusion of blood, and then unluckily they were attracted by the more unequivocal and deep rose colour, which for a moment took possession of the face of Celestina, who sat next to her.

There was no time to comment on this appearance before it was heightened by the entrance of Willoughby, who was immediately led by his sister to Lord Castlenorth, then to her Ladyship, and at length to Miss Fitz-Hayman. He paid his compliments to all with his usual graceful manners, but not without an expression of pain and embarrassment in his countenance, which he seemed vainly trying to shake off. He had yet distinguished nobody in the room

room, but those to whom he had been speaking; but on recovering from the low bow he had made to Miss Fitz-Hayman, he saw Celestina; and starting, he said in a hurrying way—“ Miss De Mornay! I thought you had left my sister! I hope I see you well!” Celestina answered only by a curtsey; and Willoughby, turning away towards Mrs. Molyneux, told her that he was a good deal fatigued, and must beg her to excuse him for the rest of the evening, but that he would be with her the following morning to breakfast. “ Your Lordship,” added he turning to his uncle, “ will perhaps allow me to pay my respects to you and Lady Castlenorth in the course of the morning:” then without waiting for the reply which his Lordship was in great form waiting to give him, he hurried out of the room, and the card tables very soon afterwards broke up.

Though Willoughby was very much altered since Miss Fitz-Hayman had last seen him, the change appeared greatly in his

his favour. His undress, and the agitation he was apparently in, which she imputed to the effect of her charms, combined to make him appear more interesting both to the mother and daughter; and as they went home, Lord Castlenorth, who grew every day fonder of the proposed marriage, spoke much in praise of his nephew's figure and manner. He has a great deal, said he, of the family countenance. He strikes me, indeed he always did from a boy, as resembling greatly the picture painted on board of William, son of Robert Fitz-Hayman, Seneschal to Henry II. who obtained the grants of the estate in Gloucestershire. His arms were azure, a lion rampant, gardant or; the original bearing of the family; you see it so in the great window of the hall at Castlenorth: the next is that of his wife, party per pale, two griffins counter sailant, sable, langued gules. This is my first quarter for the name of Bigot, a daughter of which house,

this

this William, son of Robert, married." Lord Castlenorth was now got on his favourite topic, and in the numberless quarterings of his present bearing, he quite forgot the merits of his nephew, and was busied among wyverns and boars, pearls, saltiers, fesses and bend dexters, till they arrived at their own house. The imaginations however of the rest of the company finding nothing to arrest them in a detail so often repeated, had all left him to settle his chevrons and chevronels his own way; even the attentive and complaisant Mrs. Calder was considering whether a lady in the company they had left, who had related her complaints to her, was in a right course of medicine; Lady Castlenorth was laying up a little magazine of literature, which she intended to open on Willoughby the next day; and her daughter was contemplating in her mind's eye, the handsome person of Willoughby, the figure they should make at Court, and the triumph

umph there would be, when without degrading herself, by an unequal alliance in point of family, she should notwithstanding carry to her husband so splendid a fortune, and titles so ancient and illustrious.

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OF
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FROM
THE
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MANUSCRIPT
OF
THE
LADY
OF
THE
MANOR
BY
JOHN
STEVENS
PRINTED
FOR
T. CROWDIER
IN
THE
CITY
OF
LONDON
1710.

VOL. I. F CHAP.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE party the noble visitors had left were very differently employed : Mrs. Molyneux, almost always accustomed to be heard with attention and submitted to with deference as a beauty and a woman of exquisite taste, was piqued and offended by the air of superior intelligence assumed by Lady Castlenorth, who treated her like a child that knew nothing. Miss Fitz-Hayman too had not expressed any admiration at her dress and figure, but had viewed her with supercilious silence; while Mrs. Calder, from knowing her to be a young married woman, had with more curiosity than elegance enquired whether she was likely to give the Molyneux family the heir so much desired by the older part of

of it; a question which extremely disgusted her. Lord Castlenorth, (who had complimented her upon her person, particularly on her long Chinese eyes, and the form of her face, which he said was extremely like that of Gertrude Fitz-Hayman, some time Maid of Honor to Catharine of Arragon and afterwards Countess of Powis,) was, she declared to Mr. Molyneux, the only tolerable creature of the party. "My uncle," said she, as soon as they were alone, "my uncle is a reasonable being; but for the rest! did you ever see a plainer woman than Miss Fitz-Hayman? her cloaths might be French, but I am sure she looks absolutely Dutch in them. It's really a misfortune at her time of life to be so large."

Molyneux carelessly answered—“ You see she is sensible of the misfortune by her endeavours to conceal it : but 'tis more witty than wise, I think, to find fault with her. Willoughby *can see* I suppose as well as you can, and I don't think it very politic in you to give him your authority for

disliking her. Let him marry her, and then hate and abuse her as much as you will."

"Oh!" replied the lady, "I shall always detest her, and—"

"So I dare say will he," interrupted Molyneux; "but let them be once married, and all that is very immaterial to you: it is by no means so, that your brother cannot, till he does marry, pay the second five thousand pounds of your fortune, unless he sells the Withcombe estate, which indeed the mortgagee is, as far as I can learn, very impatient to take possession of with this charge upon it, which he will immediately pay off. You see that Wil-

loughby has no choice—matrimony or the dismembering his estates; and pray never put it into his head to hesitate." This affectionate brother in law then went to his own dressing room, and Mrs. Molyneux taking a candle, surveying herself in the great glass, and wondering how it was possible such a figure and face could fail to at-

tract

tract universal admiration from all ages and sexes, retired to her bed.

The contemplations of poor Celestina, who had left them the moment the company dispersed, were much more painful. The sight of Willoughby, his surprize, and, as she thought, his displeasure at finding her still there, were as poisoned arrows in her breast. But the pride of conscious worth, aided by her disinterested affection for him, enabled her, though not to heal, yet to endure without weak complainings, the exquisite pain they inflicted, and to give her courage immediately to execute the design she had long formed of withdrawing herself from his sight for ever. It was now impossible for her to set out the next day, but that immediately following it she fixed for her departure; and after a night in which she enjoyed very little repose, she arose early in order to make the immediate preparations for her journey, which she determined, in order to save expence, to make in the Exeter stage.

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As she was desirous of giving as little trouble as possible to Mr. Molyneux's servants, who were all people of great consequence and would any of them have thought such a commission degrading, she determined to go herself into the city, where places were to be taken. It was yet so early when she went down to execute this intention, that only the housemaid was stirring, and the windows of the parlour only were opened: there Celestina sat while the maid went into the kitchen to get her a glass of milk and water, which she had asked for; and while she yet trifled with it, being indeed afraid to venture into the streets till she saw more people in them, she heard the servant, who was at the door dusting the hall and steps, speak to somebody who entered, and the instant afterwards Willoughby came into the room where she was.

She arose trembling and amazed from her seat. "Miss De Mornay," said he, "so early prepared to go out?" Celestina answered

answered—"yes," and sat down again. He laid down his hat on the side board; and as if he knew not what to say, went to the window.

Celestina sat motionless; and Willoughby, after standing there a moment, seemed ashamed of his silence yet afraid to speak. He traversed the room, mended the fire, and complaining of the cold, at length ventured to enquire of Celestina what induced her to venture out at so early an hour of so unpleasant a morning? She replied calmly, for she had by this time regained her composure, that she had business in the city.

"Business in the city!" cried Willoughby; "and at this time of the day! Ah! Celestina! there was a time when you would not thus have answered my enquiry." He was going on, when Celestina interrupted him:

"There was indeed," said she with a deep sigh, "a time when you would not have made it."

“ Not have made it !” answered he ;
“ was I not then ever interested in all that concerned you, and was any action of your’s indifferent to me ?”

He faltered and stopped. “ I was once simple enough to think so indeed,” said Celestina, “ and in those days of fortunate illusion you certainly would have made no such enquiry as the present, because I should then have done nothing of which you would not have known the motive, nor have taken any measure without the concurrence of my brother and my friend ; but as you told me yourself—would I could forget it !—that it was no longer in your power to retain those characters towards me, I am learning to forget that I ever was so happy as to fancy that no change in my situation, especially a change for the worse, could rob me of that regard so valuable always, so particularly valuable now !”

“ Gracious heaven !” cried Willoughby, entirely thrown off his guard by her words and manner—“ How have I acted, what have

have I said, to deserve this reproach from you Celestina? When we parted last—”

She again interrupted him—“ Did we part like friends? like brother and sister?”

“ No,” replied he hastily; “ but I tore myself from you like a man who sacrifices, to the performance of a fatal promise, his own happiness, and who is the victim of family pride and family necessity.” This sentence was decisive. His resolution forsook him at once, and his long stifled affection burst through all the restraints he determined to lay on it. “ Oh! Celestina!” continued he, “ you whom I loved before I knew what it was to love! you whom I now adore with a passion too strong for my reason! do not, do not, I beseech you, aggravate my sufferings. I promised to my mother—and you know how well she deserved to be obeyed—I promised to unite myself with her niece; I promised to extirpate from my heart an inclination that even then I could not conceal. Rash and ridiculous promise! No, Celestina, it is

possible

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impossible

impossible for me to cease loving you ! All my behaviour, which you have thought cold and unfriendly, was a part I was acting in opposition to my real affections ! I can sustain it no longer : I cannot bear that you should think of me with indifference : and yet —— Oh ! my mother, what a cruel task have you imposed on me ! Celestina, pity me ; I am more wretched than you can imagine ! ” His agitation now became too violent : he seized the hand of Celestina, and fervently kissed it, while her own sensations were such as no language can describe. That Willoughby loved her, that what she had considered as indifference was owing to the struggle between his duty and his tenderness, was transport such as obliterated every other sentiment. But this delirium lasted but a moment : her reason, her genuine affection for him, told her, that to indulge this tenderness was injurious to him, and she determined to shew that she could sacrifice herself to his advantage, and that con-

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tented with his brotherly attachment, she could resign him to the fortunate Miss Fitz-Hayman. The terms however in which she declared this, the softness of her voice, and her eyes filled with tears, were little calculated to reconcile Willoughby to the resolution, which, after a long dialogue, she urged him to adopt; she assured him that whatever might be her own fate, she should never forgive herself were she to be the means of his breaking a promise so solemnly given, and given at such a time, to her dear deceased benefactress. "No! my brother," said she, "she is dead, but my obligations to her can never be annihilated; and what would become of me, were I ever to feel myself reproached for ingratitude to her memory, were I to destroy the fabric she had raised for the happiness of her beloved son, and to fancy that the spirit of my more than mother, which I now often invoke with conscious pleasure, should, instead of beholding her Celestina with complacency not unsuited

to her present state of happiness, see her degraded into a selfish and unworthy being, who repays her benefits with the blackest ingratitude."

Willoughby, whose love, once suffered to obtain the advantage, now acquired more power every moment, combated these objections with very dangerous eloquence ; telling Celestina that he had determined the evening before, on a sight of Miss Fitz-Hayman, who was insupportable to him, to put an end to the negociation, and say plainly to his uncle that it was impossible for him to fulfil an engagement in which his heart never had any share. Celestina represented to him the situation of his fortune ; the absolute necessity there was for his marrying one who could repair its deficiency, and restore him to the splendid affluence of his ancestors ; but for this he talked of economy and simplicity, by which when they lived entirely at Alvestone he should be able to repair every thing ; then for a moment indulging his vivid imagination in

painting.

painting the happiness they should enjoy there together, (images of felicity which reflected in stronger colours those which Celestina had a thousand times formed, though knowing they could never be realized,) he thought suddenly of the fatal promise he had given to his mother, and his heart seemed to shrink from the idea of breaking it to obtain even the highest human happiness, which under such circumstances he felt would be dashed with gall. He obtained however from Celestina, but not without difficulty, a promise that she would lay aside her intentions of going into the city that morning to prepare for her journey, of which he would not hear; and she prevailed upon him to wait on Lord Castlenorth, as he had assured the family he would do: "Though wherefore should I do it," said he, "unless to put an end at once and for ever to all thoughts of this odious marriage."

" You ought surely," replied Celestina, " to wait on the brother of your mother tho'

no such connection had been thought of: and no dislike which you may have conceived to Miss Fitz-Hayman as your wife, should induce you to forget what you owe to your uncle.

By arguments thus reasonable, Celestina, while she prevailed on Willoughby to do what was, he was forced to own, proper, would have riveted his chains, if indeed they had not already been immovable. The noble candour and disinterested generosity of her soul, gave tenfold force to the charms of her person, which since he had last seen her, Willoughby thought greatly improved: and the tenderness of her manner, the certainty of her affection for him, which she tried to conceal with more kindness than success, had altogether such an effect on him, that nothing but the fatal promise which lay so heavy on his heart, could have prevented his marrying her immediately, in despite of every consideration of prudence or family engagement.

good old videlicet out his hand on
the right, and at every stroke out was and
then to dash off his cap, as an emblem
of an aching blow now and an incoming
one.

CHAPTER VII.

WHILE Celestina remained with Willoughby, the very tumult and agitation of her heart had sustained her courage, and like a fever that lends momentary strength to the patient it is destroying, this disorder of her spirits had supported her against the flood of tenderness that overwhelmed her as soon as she was alone. A conflict then began between her affection for him and her duty and gratitude towards the memory of his mother, which was almost too severe to be endured; but however soft her heart, her reason was equal to the task of checking a dangerous or guilty indulgence of that sensibility; and after long arguing with herself, she found she loved Willoughby better than every thing but his honor and his repose.

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The first, and too probably the second, she saw too plainly that he must forfeit, by yielding to an affection, which, circumstanced as he was, would perhaps be as fatal to both as it certainly was to his pecuniary interest. She had heard Mr. Molyneux say, who had his reasons for repeating it before her, that nothing but his marrying a woman as opulent as Miss Fitz-Hayman could prevent his selling the greater part of his estates ; " and in that case," added he, " I don't see how he can avoid disposing of Alveston too ; for with the income he will then have, to think of keeping up such a place as that, would be quite insanity." Celestina knew that no blow could fall so heavy on the heart of Willoughby, as the cruel necessity of selling this his paternal seat ; and though she was flattered and delighted when he had just before declared to her, that to obtain her every deprivation would be easy, she knew, while she now more coolly reflected on it, his local attachment to be so strong, that it

was very probable his love would soon yield to the regret which would arise from their sacrifice. "What would become of me," said she as she meditated on this matter, "were I to be the wife of Willoughby, and to see him unhappy that I was so? He would have broken his faith to his mother; he who has always been taught to hold the slightest promise sacred; he would see his estate dismembered; even Alveston, the place he so loves, would pass into the hands of strangers, and it would be to me he would owe his indigence and his unhappiness! How dare I suppose that my affection, warm and sincere as it is, could make him any amends for all those mortifications. Oh! let me not suppose it, nor ever think of risking it. I can bear to quit him now—I believe I can—but how should I endure to find myself the source of repentance to him! how should I ever survive seeing him decidedly unhappy, with the consciousness that he owed his being so to his partiality for me."

These

These reflections, and above all the obligation by which he had bound himself to obey the last injunctions of his mother, determined Celestina as to the conduct she ought to adopt; and having once seen it by the light lent by integrity and disinterested love to her strong and excellent understanding, she hastened to execute it, and certain that he was engaged for the rest of the morning, she had no sooner breakfasted than she told Mrs. Molyneux she was going to make some purchases for which she had occasion before she left London, and getting into an hackney coach, was driven into the City, where she secured a place in the Exeter stage, which was to leave London at a very early hour the next day. She returned to the house of Mrs. Molyneux about twelve o'clock, and then learned, that she and her husband were engaged to dine at Lord Castlenorth's, where a very large party were to assemble. In the card which Lady Castlenorth had sent to invite them, no mention was made
about
of

of Celestina nor was any separate card sent to her. "It is mere forgetfulness I fancy," said Mrs. Molyneux as she mentioned it to her: "you will go however, as the ceremony of an invitation is not very material."

"Pardon me," replied Celestina, "it appears to me of so much consequence in the present case, that I certainly shall not go without it. I am indeed very glad to be excused, and I am sure you will not urge me to violate etiquette in a matter where to forbear doing it is so particularly desirable."

Mrs. Molyneux, very solicitous about the contents of certain band boxes with which her woman entered at that moment, forbore to press her farther, and Celestina desiring her to let her know when she was dressed, that she might see her before she went, retired to her own room, leaving her friend to the pleasing and important occupation of the toilet, in which half what is now called morning, was usually passed by Matilda.

Celestina.

Celestina had promised Willoughby to give up for that day her intention of fixing her journey; but this promise she thought herself well justified in breaking. The entertainment at Lord Castlenorth's was given on his account: of course he would be engaged the whole day; and since she must go, she desired nothing so much as to be spared the fruitless pain of a farther discussion of the subject, and the misery, which she was not sure her resolution would support, of bidding him a last farewell.

At a little after five however, after she had undergone the form of sitting down alone to table, where she eat nothing, and had then retired to her own room, Mrs. Willoughby's woman came to say that her mistress was dressed. Celestina had once determined to tell Mrs. Molyneux how soon she meant to quit her, and to have taken leave of her, but on reflection she thought her doing so might betray her resolution to Willoughby, from whom it was necessary to conceal it till it was actually executed.

executed. She now therefore intended to leave a letter of thanks, and to take leave of Mrs. Molyneux as if it was only till the next day.

But when the moment approached in which she was in reality to bid adieu—perhaps for ever—to the friend and companion of her infancy—to the daughter of her beloved friend—to the sister of Willoughby—her heart sunk within her; and hardly had she strength to go to the door of Mrs. Molyneux's dressing room, on opening which she saw her friend standing before the glass putting the last finish to her very elegant dress, while with her eyes fixed on her own figure, she was arguing with more than her usual warmth with some person who sat beside her, and who Celestina presently discovered to be Willoughby himself, in boots, and his hair out of powder. His countenance was pale and dejected; and while his sister talked to him he leaned with one arm on another chair, and seemed rather musing than attending.

"I am

“ I am glad you are come,” said Mrs. Molyneux to Celestina as she entered, “ for here is George behaving quite absurdly: he will not go he says to Lord Castlenorth’s, though the dinner is made on purpose for him. Do Celestina—he minds your opinion always more than mine—do try to make him understand how very absurd and odly he acts.”

“ I have no talents,” Celestina would have said but the words died away on her lips; and before she could collect courage to finish the sentence, Molyneux, who was now ready, came in, and seeing Willoughby unprepared to go, expressed his surprize in terms which were warmer than Willoughby could bear with perfect command of temper. “ Surely Sir,” said he, “ I am my own master. I am not disposed to go, and I will not go !”

“ And what am I to say,” cried Mrs. Molyneux, “ to Lady Castlenorth, to my uncle, and to my cousin ?”

“ Just what you please,” replied he.

Molyneux,

Molyneux, finding by the tone in which his brother in law spoke, that he woukl not be dictated to, now called his wife out of the room, and Willoughby and Celestina were left alone.

It was now that all her fortitude and strength of mind were necessary. Her duty evidently was to persuade Willoughby to accompany his sister and to complete a marriage which his mother had when dying enjoined: a marriage so necessary to the acquisition of all that the world calls happiness in life, and on which depended the continuance of his family estate in his possession. But her heart refused to assent to what her reason pointed out as the conduct she ought to pursue, and the affection he now so evidently had for her, adding to the strength of her long attachment to him, she found it impossible to urge his quitting her for ever, though she thought she had yet courage enough to tear herself from him if she heard not his complaints

nor

nor witnessed his agonies while she combated her own.

"I cannot—I will not go to these people," said Willoughby after a short silence: why should I? since to marry Miss Fitz-Hayman would be the height of cruelty to her—since I am incapable of dissimulation—since—In short, Celestina, I feel it to be impossible for me to live with her—to live without you; and I have determined to declare myself in writing to that effect."

Celestina, whom this speech was not calculated to calm, answered, trembling—
"Indeed I think you wrong, Mr. Willoughby. As your uncle, as your mother's brother, Lord Castlenorth has undoubtedly a claim to this mark of respect. It is not probably expected to be any thing more than a visit of form, and surely you ought not rudely and without reason to decline it."

"If it were indeed meant only as a visit of ceremony," said he—

TON

"It

“ It is in your power however,” interrupted Celestina, “ to appear to consider it so: your not going must seem very extraordinary; your going certainly leads to no consequence.”

“ If you think so,” replied Willoughby; if you think I ought to go.—But why did they not ask you ?”

“ Why should they ask me ?” answered she. “ I am almost unknown to Lady Castle-north; and in the little time I ever did see her, I appeared to be no favourite. Believe me, so far from being displeased I am rejoiced at the omission.”

“ Insolent, odious woman !” cried Willoughby. “ If any thing could add to my dislike of her and her daughter, it would be the supercilious airs they gave themselves towards you even in the short moment I saw them here. But my Celestina shall never be exposed to their insulting scorn; and if I myself this time undergo the punishment of keeping up the hateful farce which I have so unhappily been en-

gaged in, it shall be with a determination to put an end to it."

At this moment Mr. and Mrs. Molyneux entered the room; and Celestina wishing them all an agreeable day, left it; having sustained with some difficulty the various emotions which were contending in her bosom. Willoughby soon after left the house, to dress at his own lodgings, which were in the neighbourhood, and having promised to join his brother and sister at dinner, they soon after departed themselves, much better satisfied with him than they were before his short conversation with Celestina.

CHAP.

1860. **CHAPTER VIII.**

CHAPTER VIII.

CELESTINA, though more unwilling than ever to go, had prescribed to herself in her cooler moments a line of conduct, from which, feeling it her duty to adhere to it, she now determined not to depart. In arguing with herself on it's propriety, and strengthening her faltering resolution, she passed the night. At four o'clock the servant who was commissioned to awaken her, came to her door: she arose and dressed herself by candle-light: the morning was cold and dark: every object appeared dreary and forlorn: she hurried on her cloaths however, and endeavoured to drive away every recollection that might enfeeble her spirits too much; but, as she passed the door of the drawing room, she

remembered that it was there she had seen Willoughby perhaps for the last time, and almost involuntarily she went in, and by the light of her solitary candle, contemplated a whole length picture of him which had just been finished for his sister: the likeness was so strong, that by the wavering and uncertain light that fell upon it, she almost fancied he was about to speak to her: she started at the idea, and feeling a sort of chilly terror at the silence and obscurity of every thing around her, she turned away and hastened to the servant who had prepared her tea in the parlour: she had however hardly time to drink it, before the hackney coach which had been ordered the night before was at the door; and having seen what little baggage she had not before sent put into it, she stepped in herself, and was soon at a distance from the residence of Mrs. Molyneux, from the friend of her early years, and was launched alone and unprotected into a world of which she had yet seen nothing but through

the favourable medium lent by affluence and prosperity to those who from thence contemplate difficulties they are never likely to encounter and calamities they probably never can participate.

That a young woman, who might still have enjoyed those indulgences, should renounce them at an age when they have so many charms; that Celestina, who had been educated with so much delicacy, and accustomed since her first recollection to every indulgence, should thus voluntarily enter on a life of comparative hardship and deprivation, may appear improbable, but when it is added that she quitted the man to whom she had so long been fondly attached, and leaving him to her fortunate rival, devoted herself to a life of solitude and regret, such an effort of heroism in a woman not yet quite nineteen, might be classed among impossibilities, were it related of any other than Celestina: but her character was an uncommon one: though she had always been told by Mrs. Wil-

loughby that her birth was very uncertain, and that nothing was known of it but that it was disgraceful to her parents, since they had taken such pains to conceal it, she felt within herself a consciousness of hereditary worth, an innate pride, which would never suffer her to believe herself descended from mean or unworthy persons: her open and commanding countenance, where sat dignity mingled with sweetness; her nymph-like and graceful form, which might have rivalled the models of Grecian art; were advantages of which, though she was not vain of them, she could not be insensible, and if she had any foible, (a perfect character it has been said must not be represented because it cannot exist) if she had any foible, it was carrying a little too far, though she carefully concealed it, that sort of pride which seemed born with her, and which, after all that has been said against it, is often, especially in a young and beautiful woman, a fortunate defect.

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The circumstances of her birth had seldom been touched upon in the family, for it was a topic which could not but be painful to her: but if ever any thing relating to it had been accidentally introduced, when Mrs. Willoughby was conversing with her three children, (as she often termed Willoughby, Matilda, and Celestina,) Willoughby would say laughingly that it was impossible she could be born of French parents: his mother had been sometimes half angry at this assertion, in which however he usually persisted, asserting, with prejudice that she declared to be entirely English, that no native of the South of France ever had a complexion or a form like her's. After she grew up, though these perfections became more eminent, Willoughby never appeared to notice them; with the improvement of her form, her mind kept pace; and as it acquired every day more strength, she gradually became more sensible of her obligation to her benefactress; but while she indulged her gra-

titude towards the friend on whom she depended, she felt that she was not born to be dependent.

This elevation of spirit now supported her; and the consciousness she was acting right, blunted for a while the poignancy of that pain which she too sensibly felt in tearing herself from Willoughby. Obliged to act for herself, having no breast on which she could with propriety lean, her naturally exalted soul acquired new firmness, before which trifling inconveniences disappeared; and with an heart occupied by the beloved image of Willoughby, and the sacrifice she was making for him, she hardly remembered that she had never in her life been in a stage coach before, till she found herself seated in one under the dark gateway of an inn in the city at five o'clock in a dreary winter morning.

Two female passengers had already taken their places; one of whom expressed great anxiety for a number of hat boxes and caravan trunks which the people belonging to the

the inn were placing in different parts of the coach, while the lady particularly recommended to their care one box, which she assured them contained her new *laylock* bonnet, an article for the safety of which she was so solicitous that she would have taken the great machine in which it was contained into the coach, had it not been opposed by the coachman, and presently after by a man who had been drinking with him, and who now preparing to enter the coach, protested vehemently against this whim of his sister Mary's.—“Who d'ye think will be scrouched and crammed up,” cried he, “with your confounded trumpery? No, no such thing. Here Daniel, pr'ythee take and stow it somewhere or another: it shall not enter the coach, I'll be sworn.”

The man then placed himself by the side of the other female passenger, opposite to Celestina, and appeared to be as anxious for his own ease as his sister was for the safety of her wardrobe. The coach moved

on, but it was still quite dark, and silence prevailed for the first four or five miles, interrupted only by some fretful expressions from the lady of the bandboxes, at the inconveniences to which people were subjected by going in stage coaches, and some exclamations against the unfortunate dampness of the morning, which she declared would certainly penetrate the covering and entirely spoil her *laylock* bonnet, which she said cost her three guineas.

“ The more fool you,” cried her brother, who was of a character Celestina had never had an opportunity of seeing before, that of a country tradesman affecting to be a wit and a buck—“ the more fool you, sister Mary. What! d’ye think a three guinea bonnet will make you look three years younger? No, no, take my word for it, your flounces, and fringes, and furbelows serve for no purpose at all but to shew your wrinkles.”

“ Wrinkles!” repeated the lady disdainfully, “ what do you mean, John Jedwyn?

Jedwyn? I declare you are so rude and disagreeable I always repent travelling with you! I wish you would find out another subject."

" Egad," answered Jedwyn, " I cannot have a worse than your wrinkles, that's true enough; and upon my soul," added he, looking confidently in the face of Celestina and then in that of the other female passenger, who, though pale and thin, was very young and very pretty, " here *is* two better subjects, one aside of me and t'other opposite: no, no, sister of mine, now day breaks a little, and lets a body see how the land lays, you'll hear no more about your wrinkles; for as Hamlet says—let me see—aye—" here's that metal that's more attractive; hey, Miss?"

Celestina, to whom this *hey Miss* was addressed, who had till now been very little aware of the species of rudeness and impertinence to which her mode of travelling might subject her, was shocked and alarmed at this address from a person, who,

who, had he seen her a few days before, would have approached her with awe and spoken to her with diffidence. She remained silent however, casting a look on the man sufficiently expressive of the contempt she felt for him: but he was not of a humour to be easily daunted or repulsed, and without seeming to understand her, began, with purse-proud pertness to relate as if it was a narrative which all the world should be informed of, that he was a grocer and chandler at Exeter, in a very flourishing trade, and in partnership with a gentleman who had married one of his sisters: “ and this *laylock* bonnet lady,” continued he, “ is my eldest sister, who has been a *visiting* this half year and better an old aunt of our’s at Camberwell. She is an old maid herself, but devilish rich, and from a sort of fellow feeling you know she intends to make our Mary here her heir. The old girl must hop the perch soon, or all her money won’t get her dear niece

niece a husband it's my opinion, unless
may be an Irishman or a strolling player."

This second attack on herself, and his visible admiration of Celestina's beauty, compleated the ill humour of his sister, who with a look where anger and scorn contended for preeminence, remained silently swelling, while the facetious trader again addressed himself to Celestina.

" What do you never make talking ? Come, since now you have a history of me, let's hear a little who you are, and where you are bound to ?"

" Sir," replied Celestina, " it is impossible that either can be of any consequence to you."

" How are you sure of that ?" cried Mr. Jedwyn with a loud laugh : " now I think nothing is more likely than that we may be better acquainted. 'Tis nothing now I believe for a young man of spirit, as well in the world as I am, to take a fancy to a pretty woman."

" A fancy !"

As said

“ A fancy !” exclaimed Miss Mary Jedwyn, with great acrimony—“ a fancy ! Jack Jedwyn I am amazed at you !”

“ And why amazed, my ancient spinster ?” retorted he. “ What the devil ! I’m my own master I hope. To be sure you are some fifteen or twenty years older than me. But what of that ?—So much the worse for you. I hope I a’nt to be governed by a duenna. What a plague, mayn’t I talk to a handsome girl I wonder without your putting in your squinnygut opinion ?”

“ If you intend to insult me,” answered the lady, trying to hide under the appearance of calm contempt her great disposition to cry :—“ if you intend to insult me, I am sure I heartily wish I had got the better of my fears and travelled alone in a post *ebai* ; for no rudeness as I might have met on the road could be worse than your’s.”

“ That’s your gratitude now, cried Jedwyn, for my coming up clear from Exeter to fetch you at a time when I had no business

business in London nor should a had for these six weeks : that's your thanks for my kindness, and for listening to your nonsen- fical fears and frights. Rude to you ! oh Lord ! as if any mortal man who has eyes would ever look at you twice. No Mary ! make yourself easy ; that weazen, winterly visage of your's, is safeguard enough if you were to travel from here to Jericho."

He then began to mimic his sister, and enlarge on the terrors to which she was, he said, perpetually subject, lest some sad daring rake of a man should carry her away : and had he been less gross and disgusting, Celestina would hardly have forbore a smile at some part of the ludicrous representation he gave of this apprehensive delicacy and trembling nicety, for which she could not, in the personal attractions of Miss Jedwyn, find any reasonable grounds ; for she was very tall, very thin, and very yellow : her long, scraggy neck, appeared hardly adequate to the support of a head, where art had so redundantly been called

in

in aid of nature, that it seemed to abound in shining black hair, nicely curled, without powder, which was suffered to wanton over her forehead and flow down her back, while a little white beaver hat, perched on one side, was meant to give to her countenance that bewitching archness which she had observed that mode of head dress to bestow on the young and lovely.

Mr. Jedwyn having exhausted all his immediate stock of wit on his sister, now left her to digest the indignation he had raised, and applied himself again to Celestina. Having no idea that any thing but money bestowed consequence, and having lived the greater part of his time among those who had less of it than himself, he had never been accustomed to allow of any superiority, nor could he comprehend how a young woman so humbly situated in life, as to travel in a stage coach, could help being charmed into liking by his wit, and awed into complaisance by his importance.

On

On such a man the native dignity of Celestina failed totally of it's usual effect. He became more and more troublesome; for he was piqued but not repressed by the coldness and even contempt of her manner. He told her, among much other impertinence, that all her shyness should not hinder him from finding out who she was; and then with yet more offensive familiarity addressed himself to the other young woman, who he thought belonged to her, and who heard his conversation with terror and dislike as great as that of Celestina.

His behaviour at length becoming insupportably uneasy to her, Celestina, when the coach reached the village where they were to breakfast, determined not to subject herself to it any longer; she therefore ordered her tea to be carried into another room, and a post chaise to be ready as soon as she had drank it.

As she sat at her breakfast, she saw the young woman, whose countenance had greatly interested her, walk by the window
slowly

slowly and dejectedly, one hand held to her forehead, and an handkerchief in the other. Ever ready to assist the unhappy, the generous heart of Celestina was touched with compassion towards this forlorn stranger. "She is as young as I am," said she, "and perhaps even more unfortunate. Why should I not take her with *me*, if she is, as I suppose, travelling the same road? why should I leave her exposed to the insults of that odious man, which, humble as her fortune seems to be, she ill knows how to bear. I may at least, though I cannot otherwise assist her, save her from passing the remainder of the journey improperly and unpleasantly." Celestina then rang the bell, and directing her fellow traveller to be called, desired her not only to partake of her breakfast, but to accompany her the rest of the way in a post chaise which she had ordered, to escape from Mr. Jedwyn.

The young person, notwithstanding the kindness of Celestina's address, still continued standing, and with a faint blush said,

Mr. Jedwyn

"You

" You are very good Madam ;—but—
though we happen to be in the same coach
I am sure I ought not to put myself on a
footing with you : I am only a servant, tra-
velling into the country to my friends to
recover my health, and it would be very
wrong in me to intrude on a lady like you."

Celestina, won by this humble simplicity,
soon reassured her new acquaintance, and
soon after Jessy Woodburn, (which was
her name,) followed Celestina to the chaise;
where having paid the coach in London,
she now had directed her box to be placed.

Mr. Jedwyn left the hot rolls and cho-
colate with which he was regaling himself,
to remonstrate at the chaise door against
this secession. Celestina, without giving
him any answer, drew up the glass's the
moment she was seated, which gave Jed-
wyn an opportunity to say to the postillion,
who was not yet on horseback, that if he
would in the course of a fortnight find out
who the lady was, and whither she went, he
would make up the half crown he then
gave.

gave him half a guinea. The boy readily promised to execute to the best of his power so lucrative a commission; and Celestina and her companion were soon at a distance, and proceeded on their journey much pleased with the exchange they had made of a conveyance.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IX.

CELESTINA having by her easy and gentle manners conquered part of the extreme diffidence of her companion, began to question her about her situation in life; and as she had one of those faces and one of those voices which win every heart where any spark of feeling is found, Jeffy soon found herself enough at ease and even flattered by the interest she seemed to take in her fate, as to acquire courage to relate the following narrative.

" I must go back a great way, Madam, since you command me to tell you all I know of myself; even as far as my grandfather, who is still living, and who is one of the richest farmers in our part of Devonshire using his own land, as all his

family

family I have heard have done before him for a great many years. He married a clergyman's daughter who had been educated very well, greatly indeed above the sort of life she was to lead as a farmer's wife. But she was very pretty. Her father left her unprovided for, and so she married perhaps more for money than love. My mother was the only child they ever had, and my grandmother, though her own education had only served to make her unhappy, would fain have had her daughter brought up as she had been herself; but her husband, of a very hard and obstinate temper and repenting perhaps of having married a wife too fine for him, was so far from allowing her to have any education, that he went to the other extreme; insisting that his girl should do as his mother did thirty or forty years before, and not only be taught to understand all the business of the farm, but to live as he did himself, and as he obliged his wife to do, the same as the farming men.

The

The consequence of this difference of opinion was fatal to my poor mother: one of her parents took every opportunity of giving her notions above herself, which very naturally, she easily took; and the other seemed to delight in humbling and degrading her: when she was about eighteen she lost her mother, and then was forced to submit to the harsh and unnecessary confinement imposed upon her by her father, from whom she endeavoured to conceal her passion for reading, which only gained strength by this unreasonable restraint. Home was very uneasy to her, but she could hardly ever leave it but by stealth. As she was likely to have a very good fortune, she had numberless suitors; but my grandfather would suffer none of them to see her; designing to marry her to a relation of his own almost as old as himself, to whom she had an invincible aversion, which through the timidity of her nature she dared not declare.

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A neighbouring farmer, with whom my grandfather had for many years been at variance, and with whom he had had two or three law-suits, had two sons, both brought up to his own business; the eldest was married and had a family, but the other had been spoiled by his mother, and the notice taken of him by the neighbouring gentlemen on account of his skill in field sports; he had indeed always been rather fonder of being with them at cricket matches, and races, than minding his farm. He found means to introduce himself to my mother, though he had been positively refused by my grandfather: he won her affections, and after several private meetings she agreed to go off with him: the consequence of which was her having the door of her paternal house shut against her for ever.

For a little time after this marriage my mother was received at the house of her father in law, but on his death it became the right of the eldest son, who had a

number

number of children; and as my father's family were all irritated and disappointed by the obstinate resentment of my grandfather towards his daughter, they soon behaved with such unkindness towards her, that she prevailed on my father to quit them, and take a little farm of his own, which he with difficulty borrowed money enough to stock, for he had long since paid away in discharge of old debts, all the money left him by his father. He had been so long used to an idle, or rather a gay life, that he could not now accustom himself to the labour requisite on so small a farm. My mother however by incessant attention remedied for some years this deficiency on his part; and though nothing was laid by, they contrived to live; my mother making from time to time attempts to obtain her father's pardon, though she received nothing but cruel and positive refusals, either to see her or her children, or ever to give them the least assistance.

“ This hardness of heart, which should have excited pity, only made my father treat my poor mother with harshness too. A young man of fortune in the neighbourhood just then coming of age, was often at his seat near our little farm, and took such a fancy to my father that he was always at his house, living as he lived, and associating with gentlemen from London, and women they brought down with them. He never came home but in such a terrible humour, that I and my sister, who were then about ten and nine years old, used to be terrified to death ; yet when he was gone, as he sometimes was for weeks together, my mother lamented his absence and the loss of his affection, much more than the fatigue, poverty, and sorrow, to which his conduct exposed us all.

“ Present anxiety and the fear of leaving me and my sister to a fate as deplorable as her own, together with the incessant toil attending the care of a farm wholly neglected by her husband, gradually destroyed

and

her

her constitution, till at last, Madam, her heart was quite broken. When she found she had only a few hours to live, she entreated the clergyman of the parish to go to her father, and beg, if he would not see her, that he would only send her his forgiveness, for she could not die in peace without it.

“ Even that he had the cruelty to refuse ! I lost my dear mother, Madam ; and my sister, who was always of a weak constitution, followed her soon afterwards to the grave. Ah ! how often have I wished that I had died too. Troubles now multiplied around us : my father’s great friend had by this time so compleatly ruined himself, that every thing was seized and he left the country. My father having no longer a house to be at, was forced to live at home ; but it was only for a little while ; for during my mother’s illness every thing had been neglected, and we could not pay our rent ; so the landlord seized, our cattle

were sold, and we were turned out of the farm and went to a miserable cottage in the next village; where, as my father was so unused to work, we subsisted for a while on the reluctant charity of my uncle, whose daughters were always reproaching me with taking their bread from them. Believe me, Madam, I did all I could do to earn it for my father and myself: but what could hands so feeble as mine do towards supporting us both. I made an attempt to see my grandfather, and to implore his pity and protection towards one who had never offended him; but he ordered me to be driven from his door, and never again suffered to appear there: orders which those he had about him were ready enough to execute. I returned home quite disheartened indeed, but still endeavouring to the utmost of my power to procure a support by my labour for my father and myself; I even went out to work in the fields; but all I could earn was so insufficient that we often wanted necessary food, at least I have

have often wanted it. But my father had made an acquaintance with a widow woman in the next village, who was said to be worth forty or fifty pounds. She was young too and not ugly, and in less than a year after my dear mother's death, he married her, and we removed to her house.

“ The extremes of poverty I had before known, bitter as I thought them, were comparatively happiness to what I now endured. I became the servant of my mother in law, only without wages. She soon brought my father an increase of family : to them then I was nurse, and very soon had neither sleep by night or respite by day. I thought it my duty to bear every thing for my father, without murmuring, but as my fatigue and sufferings encreased, my dejection encreased too, and I was sometimes through mere despondence unable to fulfil my heavy tasks, in which if I failed in the slightest degree, I was insulted with opprobious language and told to go to my rich grandfather.

H 3

“ Alas !

“ Alas ! my rich grandfather continued inexorable ; but home was so dreadful that I determined to go to service, being near twenty, and able I thought to undertake any place that could be offered me ; for a harder than that I now filled, it was impossible to meet with.

“ I applied to a relation I had at Exeter, who after some enquiries procured me a place in the family of an attorney in London, who was willing to dispense with my want of experience in favour of my being a country servant. Thither therefore I went, and entered as cheerfully as I could on a new mode of life ; endeavouring to forget that I ever had any expectations of a better. The dark, damp places where the servants of persons in the middling ranks of life, live in the city, appeared very dreadful to me ; and it was my business, after a day of fatiguing work, to sit up for my master or the clerks, who were often out very late. My mistress too was a very fine lady, and kept a great deal of com-

pany,

pany, and it was part of my employment to wait on her own maid, who was also a sort of housekeeper, and much more difficult to be pleased than the lady herself: she took care indeed that I should never want business; but determined as I was never again to be a burthen to my father, I went through the duties of my place, heavy as they were, with courage and steadiness; so that even this second mistress, however unwilling to be pleased, could not find fault with me.

“ Among a great number of clerks that my master kept, there was one who was employed merely to copy, and was not admitted among the rest; though he looked I am sure more like a gentleman than any of them. He did not lodge in the house, but came every morning early to his work, and sat at it, poor young man! till five or six o’clock at night, when he dined with us servants, after the family and other clerks had done. Often indeed, instead of eating, he would sigh all dinner time as if his heart

would break ; and I could not help fancying that he had been used to live quite in other company ; though he never seemed above ours, but was always very obliging, though he was very melancholy.

“ It happened once, that my master had some extraordinary business to do that required great haste ; it was some papers that were to be sent to India ; and Mr. Cathcart, the young man I have been speaking of, hearing my master say how afraid he was he should not get ready, offered to work all day on Sunday, when none of the rest of the clerks would have staid from their pleasure on any account. My master was pleased with his willingness to oblige, and he sat down to his task. Nobody was in the house but him and me ; for it was the custom of my master and mistress to dine in the country on a Sunday with my mistress’s mother at Edmonton ; and all the gentlemen in the office went different ways. The footman attended my mistress ; and Mrs. Gillam, her maid, always went to bluew .

see her acquaintance, who lived at the other end of the town, and very often came home sadly out of temper because her place was not so fine and so fashionable as their's ; and then I was sure to suffer for it, as indeed I did for all her ill temper when she had nobody else to vent it upon.

“ Ah ! Madam ! often of a Sunday in the summer I have gone up into our dining room, because the street was so close and narrow that below we hardly saw day light from one end of the year to the other ; and I have opened the sash, and looked against the black walls and shut windows of the houses opposite, and have thought how dismal it was ! Ah ! I remembered too well the beautiful green hills, the meadows and woods, where I so often used to ramble with my sister when we were children, in our own country, before we were old enough to know that my poor mother was unhappy, and had learned to weep with her ! How often have I wished those days would come again, and how often

H 5 have

have I shut my eyes and tried to fancy I saw once more all the dear objects that then were so charming. Alas ! the dream would not last long ! or if it did it served only to make me feel more unhappy, when, instead of being able to indulge it, I was obliged to go back to hard, and what was yet worse, to dirty work in our dismal kitchen. In Devonshire I had been used to work hard enough ; but I had always fresh air to breathe, and could now and then of an evening sit at our cottage window, and look at the moon, and fancy that my mother might be there with my sister, and that they saw and pitied their poor unfortunate Jeffy. Tears then relieved me ; and I gathered courage to bear the next day the ill humour of my mother in law, which now that it was over I fancied was not worse than the ill humour of Mrs. Gillam. My father's harshness indeed was worse than either, because I loved him, and every time he used to speak cruelly

elly to me, and seem to wish me away, it was like a dagger in my heart!"

The tears of the unfortunate Jeffy here interrupted her narrative a moment, and Celestina took occasion to say—

" But what were you going to tell me about Mr. Cathcart? You seem to have forgotten him?"

" Ah! Madam!" replied she with a deep sigh, " I thought after I began to talk of him, that I was doing wrong, and that it was better not to say any more about him: besides, Madam, though you are so good and so condescending, it is not perhaps proper for me to trouble you with all the reasons I have to be sorrowful."

" Indeed I wish extremely to know them," replied Celestina; " and particularly I desire to know all that relates to Mr. Cathcart. The little you have said, has interested me greatly."

" It was on the Sunday, Madam, that I was speaking of, when every body was gone out, that poor Mr. Cathcart first spoke

spoke to me alone. Often before that to be sure I thought he pitied me, when he saw me doing work too heavy for my strength; and often he has offered to help me, and did not disdain to assist me though the footmen did; and yet I am sure his look and his manners were a great deal more like those of a nobleman than anything else. Mrs. Gillam however was always so angry if she saw him speak to, or help me, and used to put herself into such passions, that he was afraid almost of looking at me before her, least it should be the occasion of my being used ill.

“ On the Sunday, Madam, that I was speaking of, he had finished all my master left for him to do, between six and seven o’clock: for he wrote such a beautiful hand, and so quick that his writing seemed done by enchantment. That day he had eat no dinner: but a little after six o’clock he came down into the kitchen, where I was sitting: ‘ Jeffy,’ said he, ‘ will you make me some tea: I am fatigued, and I think.

think it will refresh me.' Ah! Madam! how pleased I was to do any thing for him. As he sat on the other side of the table drinking his tea, I looked at him, and thought his eyes seemed inflamed as if he had been crying, and he seemed more melancholy than usual. ' What is the matter, Mr. Cathcart?' said I, ' you have tired yourself too much?'

" Yes,' answered he, ' I have been writing a long time; but I have finished my business, so I never mind my head ache.' He seemed desirous of turning the discourse, and reaching across to the side of the table where I sat, he took up a torn book, which, while I was sweeping the clerk's office the day before, my master had thrown to me, bidding me burn it, for that he would not have such trumpery lay about there. I never had time to read, though my poor mother had taught me to love it; and I had thrown this book into a drawer, from whence I had taken it but a moment before Mr. Cathcart came down.

BOOK I

" He

“ He enquired how I came by it, and when I told him, asked if I had read it? I answered that I had no time. ‘ It is my book,’ said he, sighing from the bottom of his heart as he spoke; ‘ and it is the story of a poor young man, who was as unfortunate as I am: but he had the resolution to end his calamities; he indeed was not enchain'd to life as I must be. Heaven and earth! exclaimed he, as if at that moment oppressed by some idea altogether insupportable, ‘ how long shall I remain the wretch I am?’

“ He started from his chair, and walked about the room with looks so wild that I was terrified to death: I went to him trembling, and besought him to be calm, to tell me if I could do any thing for him: he looked eagerly at me a moment and burst into tears—‘ Ah! Jeffy,’ cried he, ‘ you pity me, and all the return I make is to terrify and distress you!’ For a moment Madam, after this gust of passion, he became calmer, and sat down; then as I stood

I stood still trembling by him, he took my hands within his and put them to his burning forehead and eyes ; but after a moment seeming to recollect himself, he sighed, let them go, and said— ‘ I hardly know, Jeffy, what ailed me just now ; but I was so tired, my spirits were so exhausted by having been so long at the desk employed in such tedious kind of writing, that when I looked at you— when you seemed concerned for me— I am so little used to meet any friendly looks here, that your pity affected me strangely ; I felt just then how terrible, how very terrible my fate was ; and this proud rebellious heart, unsubdued yet to my cruel destiny, deprived me for a moment of my reason.’

“ Thank God, replied I, you are now easier : indeed you did sadly frighten me. Tell me, dear Mr. Cathcart, why did you talk so, and why are you so unhappy ? ”

‘ I will tell you, Jeffy,’ answered he, ‘ though you are the only person in the house

‘ house who ever shall guess at my real situation. I am unhappy :—not because I was born and educated a gentleman, and am now reduced to a condition worse than absolute servitude, but because those I love and feel for more than for myself are fallen with me ; because my labour—and yet I am sacrificing my life to follow it—my labour is insufficient to support a woman, delicately brought up, and her four infant children ! ’

“ Ah ! Madam ! all the sorrow I had ever known was nothing to the cold death-like feeling which seemed to wither up my heart, when for the moment I thought Mr. Cathcart was married and had a family ! I did not know at that time why it hurt me so : but I was not able to speak, while he, after remaining silent a minute, said—‘ By my work to-day I have earned a guinea more than my weekly stipend : surely therefore instead of murmuring thus, I ought rather to be thankful that I have had power to do this, for to-morrow.

‘Now I shall receive it, and to-morrow I shall be able to carry to my Sophy and her children some necessaries which they have long wanted, but which I could not before spare money enough to procure for them, out of what I earned weekly as the only support of us all.’

‘Poor as I am, Madam, I could not help unlocking my tea chest where I kept my little savings; and though I trembled like a leaf as I did it, I put a guinea and some silver, all I had, into a paper, and carried it to him. Mr. Cathcart, said I, pray be not offended, but take this trifle, and make use of it for your family; they want it more than I do, and you cannot think how much happier it will make me if you have it, than if I lay it out on myself.

‘Gracious God!’ cried he, ‘this is too much. No, my dear, generous girl, do not imagine I will take what you have so hardly acquired. Believe me, Jemmy, this instance of sensibility and kindness, charming

‘ charming as they are, only render me more wretched. In the meanest servitude, in the lowest degradation, amid the hardest labour, I have found a soul so much superior to those I have met with in polished society : but your form, your manners, your sentiments, are not those of your station : surely you were not born what I now see you?’

“ Indeed, replied I, I was : my father is now a labourer ; I have no mother ; nor any friend willing, if they are able, to do any thing for me : but while I am able to work I must not, I will not be discontented, whatever hardships I may undergo, if you Mr. Cathcart will but let me be your friend. Let me see your children ; indeed I shall love them ; and if your lady will give me leave I will work for them : I can bring any thing she will give me to do home, and work in my own room instead of going to bed.

“ I do not know Madam, how I was able to say so much, for I felt my heart

throb,

throb as if it would break all the time I was speaking. Oh ! Madam ! I was suddenly transported as it were to heaven, when Mr. Cathcart, thanking me a thousand times for my offer, told me that the children he supported were not his own but his sister's, whose husband had been undone by the villainy of some people with whom he had been connected in trade, and by the wickedness of an attorney ; it is impossible to describe how I was relieved to find he was not married ! for though I am sure I should have loved his children dearly because they were his, yet methought I loved them much better now."

Sensations she had herself felt in regard to Willoughby, now forcibly occurred to Celestina : she remained silent however, and Jessy went on.

" After this time, Madam, Mr. Cathcart took every opportunity of speaking to me ; and I got leave to go out one evening, and he took me to see this beloved and unfortunate sister. It was in one of those

little

little new houses which are run up in a road leading from Islington to London, that Mr. Cathcart's family lodged: his sister, Madam, was so like him, that the moment I saw her I could have died for her; and I forgot all the reluctance with which I agreed at his earnest request to go to see her: she seemed to be four or five years older than he is, and was very pale and thin, but she had such beautiful eyes, and hands so white!—her form was so graceful, so commanding, that her very plain dress, and a close cap, such as widow's wear, could not disfigure her, or make her look otherwise than like a gentlewoman. When her brother led me in, she held out her hand to me, and begged I would sit down: though in such a poor little lodging, I felt that she was so much my superior that I could not obey her without hesitation; but she presently by her gracious manners dissipated my fears, and I sat down by her close to a frame on which she had been working. A cradle, with a sleeping baby

in.

in it, stood at her feet, by which a little girl of three years old sat, as if watching the infant, and on hassocks near the window were placed two little boys, the elder not above six years old, who were learning their tasks. As soon as my reception was over, she smiled on her brother with more cheerfulness than it seemed possible a moment before for her countenance to assume; and desired he would assist her in getting some tea for me. Cathcart went down stairs, and then she entered into conversation with me: ‘ My brother,’ said she, ‘ has often told me how unfit you are for the condition in which he found you, and if I may judge by your appearance, you certainly were not born to it. Had my dear Frank been any other than he is, I should have supposed him influenced by beauty; but I know that mere personal loveliness in any rank never affected him, and many reasons induced me, Jeffy, to consent to see you—reasons which relate to him as well as yourself.

‘ He

• He has told you, Jeffy, that he was born
• to prospects very different from those
• now before him—prospects which are I
• fear vanished for ever. My misfortunes,
• which are such as I dare not attempt to
• relate to you, have extended to him:
• yet does he with unexampled generosity,
• give himself up to servitude, to assist me
• and my poor children. Judge whether
• such a brother is not dear to me—judge
• whether I ought not to love all that he
• loves, and to comply as far as possible
• with all his wishes.

• I have of late seen with infinite pain,
• that in addition to all the calamities of
• indigence, a passion has seized him,
• which must encrease, and may perpet-
• uate, his misfortunes, and I consented,
• and even wished to see you, that I might
• fairly state to you the situation he is in,
• as to circumstances; in the hope—a
• hope in which I trust I shall not be de-
• ceived, that your good sense, and even
• your regard for him, will lead you to
• avoid

“ avoid an error so seducing as that of becoming his wife.”

“ I do not know Madam, how I looked at that moment, but I believe Mrs. Elphinstone thought I should faint, for she gave me immediate assistance by opening the window, fetched me a glass of water, and very earnestly entreated me to try to recover myself before her brother returned. I should be too tedious, Madam, were I to relate all that passed even in the few minutes we were together afterwards. I found that Cathcart’s regard for me was such, that he was willing to forget what he had once been, and what he might still be, and to unite himself for ever with the poor and humble Jessy. Ah! Madam, had it not been for Mrs. Elphinstone’s sake, who with her children had no other dependence, I should have feared no poverty, no distress with him; but should have been too happy to have begged round the world with him: as it was, I saw that I ought not to think a moment of a marriage,

riage, which would at best only encrease his difficulties. Oh! how I then wished that my grandfather were less cruel, my poor father less imprudent!

“ After this first interview with Mrs. Elphinstone, I saw her whenever I could get leave to go out, which was not indeed very often: but my master, who did not want humanity, seeing me look dreadfully ill, ordered Mrs. Gillain to let me go out whenever she could spare me, for air. Mrs. Elphinstone, who watched every alteration of my countenance, guessed at all I suffered; and at length she became so fond of me, that she rather desired than opposed the completion of her brother’s wishes. The struggle I underwent nearly cost me my life: but at length, Madam, I have left them both. I could not bear to see my dear Cathcart every day more and more unhappy: I could not bear to become a burthen to him: for some time I redoubled my diligence, and exerted myself greatly beyond my strength, from a hope, that by becoming

becoming necessary to my mistress, I should obtain an encrease of wages, out of which I thought it possible that I might be able to save something; but the upper servant took pains to render all my endeavours ineffectual; and my health declined so rapidly under the labour and anxiety I endured, that Cathcart, whose uneasiness compleated the measure of my sufferings, at length proposed that I should quit my service, as the only means of saving my life, and try what my native air would do to restore me.

“ I hope my father will receive me without unkindness, and suffer me to stay till I am able to take another service; and sometimes I am willing to flatter myself that my grandfather may relent, though it is more possible than probable.”

“ And where,” enquired Celestina, “ have you left your lover?”

“ Ah! Madam,” replied the weeping Jeffy, “ he still remains writing for the existence of his sister and her children: at

his pen from early morning, to eleven or twelve at night. By such assiduous application he is enabled indeed to earn double the money he would otherwise do; but his dear health is fast declining, and God only knows," continued she, clasping her hands together, "whether I shall ever see him more: but if not, one comfort, one great comfort is, that we shall not be separated long:—in heaven nothing can part us!"

" Let us however hope," said Celestina, " that your tenderness, your fortitude, and generosity, will be rewarded on earth. Your father then knows nothing of your arrival?"

" Ah! no, Madam: I dared not write to him, for fear he should have been angry with me for having quitted my service, and have refused to receive me. Now I hope, when he sees me so sadly altered, for I am not at all like what I was when I left him, he will have some pity upon me, and suffer me at least to stay in his house till I have

have strength enough to undertake another service."

" You shall go with me, however, to-night," said Celestina, " and you shall stay with me till you are fitter than you now appear to be to undergo an interview with this cruel father."

The poor Jeffy, oppressed by this goodness, could not speak, but she kissed the hand of her benefactress with a respectful gratitude, and a mournful but not unpleasing sadness kept the generous and soft hearted Celestina silent till their arrival at the inn where they were to remain that night.

CHAPTER X.

EARLY in the evening of the following day, Celestina and her humble friend arrived at the lodging she had taken: it was a small new built brick house, on the edge of an extensive common: enclosures at a distance relieved a little the dreary uniformity of the view from it's windows, and a village church, with a few straggling houses scattered round the edge of the heath at the distance of about half a mile, gave some relief to the eye, and some intimation of an inhabited country: winter had alike divested the common of it's furze and heath blossoms, and the few elms on it's borders, of their foliage. All was alike dull, and unpleasant: but Celestina remembered that she had now escaped

escaped from the Castlenorts, from the sight of preparations for Willoughby's marriage, and that if she was not to live to see him happy, she should not now witness his struggles and his distress: she tried to believe that she could receive intelligence of his marriage with composure, and be glad in the reflection that he had obeyed his mother; but her heart revolted, and all she could promise herself was, to exert her resolution to obtain such a state of mind, as might enable her to hear, without very acute anguish, of an event, which, notwithstanding all that had passed at her last interview with Willoughby, she still considered as inevitable.

The first day after her arrival was passed in settling herself in her new habitation by the aid of Jeffy, who helped her to arrange her books and her wardrobe. The pensive simplicity of her new friend's character won upon her every hour; and now, deprived as she was of all her former connections, and of every prospect of happiness

ness for herself, she was sensible of no other pleasure than what arose from the power of soothing the sorrows of her unfortunate companion, and forming schemes for restoring her to the favour of her grandfather; and to her unhappy lover, in whose fate she became as much interested from the artless description Jeffy had given, as if she had herself known him. It was necessary however to part with her: but as she appeared in too weak a state of health to encounter the rude reception she might meet with from her father and her mother in law, if she appeared before them without notice, Celestina thought it best to keep her till an answer could be obtained from them, and she therefore hired a messenger, by whom the letter the trembling Jeffy indited was dispatched to the cottage of Woodburn, which was about seven miles distant. Towards evening he returned, and brought a reluctant and surly consent from her father to receive her for a little time till she recovered her health.

The

The terms in which this answer was written, though Celestina endeavoured to give them the best interpretation she could, were cruelly painful to poor Jeffy, who wept over the letter, while Celestina, with the most generous pity, assured her, that if her father's behaviour to her was unkind, and her stay at his house uncomfortable, she would again receive her, and that she should be welcome to remain with her till her health was re-established, and till means could be found to procure for her the favour of her grandfather, who, on enquiry of her hostess, Celestina found to be as Jeffy had represented him—a very rich farmer, now quite superannuated, and almost childish; who having once determined to resent his daughter's marriage, had persisted in it from the hard obstinacy of his nature, and had been supported in it by the arts of an old female relation who lived with him, and who, while she made a purse every year out of what was entrusted to her, looked forward with avidity to his

death, when she hoped to possess the whole. Celestina procured an horse and a man to lead it, the expence of which she paid herself, and on the third day after their arrival at Thorpe Heath, Jessy took leave of her lovely and generous benefactress, who was now left to reflect, without interruption, on her own destiny.

Till lately she had not been conscious of the force of her attachment to Willoughby; for it began so early in life, that she had never been alarmed by the uneasiness which seizes the heart on it's first reception of a new passion: she now however found that her existence had been delightful to her, only as his idea had mingled itself with every hour of it, and that now, when she believed she ought no longer to indulge herself in thinking of him, she could think of nothing else with either interest or pleasure: the benevolence and tenderness of her heart still afforded her some satisfaction, while she could exert it in favour of the unfortunate, and the power of befriending

friending the desolate and unhappy Jessy had called off her attention a little from her own uneasy feelings ; but now, having done all she could at present do for her, her heart was again sensible of the cruel deprivation to which she was condemned, and her mind occupied in reflecting on what Willoughby would think, what he would say, when he learned she was gone ; in conjectures on his behaviour to the Castlenorts, and in trembling solicitude whether he would write to her, or without any farther indulgence of an attachment, which he knew he ought not to cherish, drive her from his recollection, at least till he had obeyed the injunctions of his mother, and by compleating the marriage she had insisted upon, put it out of his power to think of Celestina otherwise than as his sister.

Two or three days passed thus, before Celestina could acquire in any degree her usual serenity, and sit down to her books, her drawing, or her work. By music,

which she now fancied would sooth and calm her spirits, she could not amuse herself; for though she had a piano forte which used to be called her's, yet, as it had never been formally given to her, and as Mrs. Molyneux had not mentioned it, Celestina would not take it on her quitting London. At length the first uneasy sensations on her change of situation a little subsided, and she began to consider of a letter which she thought it indispensably necessary to write to Mrs. Molyneux.

In the mean time the ardent and eager temper of Willoughby exhibited in London a scene, which, could Celestina have known, it would have redoubled all her anxiety. The dinner of which he had been with difficulty induced to partake at Lord Castle-north's, had served only to fill him with new and invincible disgust towards the whole family, and hardly could he command himself so as not to betray it. The restraint, however, which, in consideration of their relationship to his mother, he determined, whatever it

cost

cost him, to put upon his sentiments, gave to two of the persons concerned a favourable impression of him: Lord Castlenorth, fond of form, and of that reserve which he fancied supported dignity, liked his nephew the better he said for not assuming the familiar and too easy manners, so disagreeable to him in the behaviour of most of the young men he saw; and Miss Fitz-Hayman, who liked his person better on every interview, and who never could for a moment suppose that any man could behold her's with indifference, imputed to respect and admiration that distant politeness which was intended to conceal aversion. Lady Castlenorth, however, who had seen more of the world than her daughter, and had not the same préjudices as her husband, was by no means pleased with the observations she made in the course of the day, nor with the pleasure she saw for the first time in the eyes of Willoughby when the moment of their departure arrived. This was not till four in the morning.

morning. The late hour of dinner, and the parties which were made for cards, brought on a supper at near two, of which Lady Castlenorth seemed to expect her guests would partake: they staid therefore; Lord Castlenorth retiring early, by the advice of Mrs. Calder; and the versatility of Lady Castlenorth's knowledge being displayed the whole time to the extreme fatigue of Willoughby, and by no means to the satisfaction of his sister, who found in her aunt a desire to monopolize not only all the conversation, but the attention of every man present, to whom she contrived to address herself by turns, and with whom she appeared immediately offended, if Mrs. Molyneux, whom she considered and treated as a pretty automaton, attracted even for a moment any of that admiration that she was generally, at her own parties and among her own friends, accustomed to engross.

Willoughby was set down by his sister at his own lodgings, and Mrs. Molyneux herself

herself knew nothing of Celestina's departure till breakfast the next day; when busied with preparations for a ball subscribed for by some noblemen of her acquaintance, she listened to the information hardly knowing she received it, and testified no other concern than by faying coldly—"I wish she had staid till to-morrow, for she has really something of a taste, and I should have liked to have had her here when I dress." This important dress, however, was too momentous to suffer her to think long of any human being; and when her brother called upon her about three o'clock, she was adjusting the ornaments on a tiara of her own invention, and had forgotten for the moment not only the sudden journey of Celestina but Celestina herself.

Willoughby sat down by her; and in hopes of Celestina's coming in, entered into conversation on frivolous subjects, to which he in fact gave so little attention that he hardly heard the answers his sister gave

gave him. He desired, however, to prolong the time of his stay as much as possible, that without asking for Celestina, he might see her; and he knew, that busied as Mrs. Molyneux was, he should have an opportunity of speaking to her without observation.

The tiara was at length ornamented, and no Celestina appeared: Willoughby then enquired why she did not assist at an operation so important; and heard with pain and amazement that she had left the house at five o'clock that morning.

"And whither is she gone?" said he in a voice hardly audible: "and how could you suffer her to go?"

"Oh! as to that," answered Mrs. Molyneux, quite regardless of his distress, "she has taken those lodgings you know in Devonshire that you have so often heard her speak of; and for her going, you know she has long determined on it, and indeed I did not oppose it, thinking as things are,

are, it was the very best resolution she could take."

"As things are!" repeated Willoughby, trying vainly to stifle the painful sensation his sister's coldness and insensibility gave him: "I know not, Mrs. Molyneux, what you mean exactly, but—"

He was proceeding, when the hair dresser, who on these great occasions was employed in preference to her own maid, was announced; and Mrs. Molyneux, ordering him into her powdering room, walked immediately away, and left Willoughby sitting like a statue by the dressing table she had left.

He remained there near a quarter of an hour, in a state of mind difficult to be described: the danger to which Celestina must be exposed, alone and unprotected; the probability of his losing her for ever; nay of her sacrificing herself to some of those pretenders whom he doubted not her beauty would attract, in the same spirit of disinterested heroism, as that which had determined

determined her to quit London: the excessive tenderness he was conscious of towards her, against which he found every hour the impossibility of contending, and the increasing disgust that he felt in contemplating the chains he had promised to put on, all contributed to overwhelm his mind with anguish, from which he saw not how it was easy or even possible to escape.

His first idea was to obtain a direction to Celestina, and follow her immediately; but he knew the delicacy of her mind, and he felt perfectly what was due to her situation:—reflections which checked those intentions almost as soon as they were formed; and before he could decide on what he ought to do, he received from Molyneux, who had just come in and gone out again, an unsealed note, containing these lines:

“ DEAR GEORGE,

“ I am just returned from Lincoln’s Inn,
“ where I have been to meet Atkins and
“ some

“ some other cursed bores about money :
“ I cannot get what I want of them : do
“ contrive to let me have five hundred
“ this evening for my pocket, and I wish
“ you would arrange things so as to have
“ the remainder of the unpaid five thou-
“ sand and interest ready by this day
“ sennight or it will much inconvenience
“ me. Castlenorth is your man ; and it
“ is but speaking for the money to have it.
“ Let us see you to-morrow to dinner.

“ Yours ever,

“ P. H. MOLYNEUX.”

This note, so peremptorily requiring what the writer knew Willoughby could not obtain but by hastily confirming those measures which were so displeasing to him ; this unfeeling precipitation, which appeared only a finesse to compel him to plunge into them, roused Willoughby from the state of undetermined anxiety he had been in, into anger and indignation : his first solicitude however was to raise instantly

stantly the five hundred pounds for that evening's play, which was clearly the meaning of his brother in law; and snatching up his hat, he left the house, determining, in the first emotions of his resentment, to enter it no more. He took his way towards the city, and applying to a banker in Lombard-street, in whose hands his father had kept his money, and who had had considerable advantages by his own affairs during his minority, he obtained, not without solicitation the most painful to his pride and on terms as hard as would have been demanded by a common money lender, the sum he wanted; which he enclosed in a cover, and sent by one of the clerks, with these words:

“ Mr. Willoughby encloses to Mr. Molyneux the sum for which he has so pressing an occasion, and assures him he will lose no time in procuring the rest, that all pecuniary transactions may be at an end between them.”

It

It was with great difficulty he bridled the natural vehemence of his temper, and forbore to express with bitterness the displeasure Molyneux's proceeding had given him. More resolute than ever not to be dictated to by his brother in law, and detesting more than before the marriage which was thus intended to be forced upon him, dissatisfied with every idea that occurred to him, and having no friend in London to whom he could open his oppressed heart, he determined at length to procure a direction to Celestina, and returning immediately to Cambridge himself, consult a friend he had there, on whose judgment and attachment he had an equal reliance, how he should avoid an alliance with the woman he detested and the hazard he now incurred of losing the woman he adored.

He sent therefore a servant, as soon as he returned to his lodgings, to procure from the servants of Molyneux a copy of the direction that had been put on the trunks.

trunks sent to Celestina. This being obtained, he ordered a post chaise, and late as it was, and without giving any account of himself either to his sister or the Castle-norths, he set out for Cambridge, and arrived at his college about four in the morning of the next day.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XI.

CELESTINA in the mean time became better reconciled to the plan of life she had adopted; and after being near a week at her new abode, during which time she heard nothing either of Willoughby or his sister, she wrote to the latter as follows:

“ My dear Mrs. Molyneux will be glad
“ to hear that her wandering friend is set-
“ tled contentedly, if not happily, in her
“ new abode, and has already subdued
“ her mind to her fortune so much as to
“ regret only the society of those she has
“ been so long accustomed to love, and
“ by no means the scenes in which she has
“ left them. My habitation is in the
“ house

“ house of a man who was formerly master
“ of a coasting vessel, in which occupa-
“ tion having made money enough to
“ support himself and his wife in their old
“ age, and all his children being married
“ and provided for, he built this house a
“ few miles from the port where he used
“ to trade: their only servant is a mere
“ West country paissanne, who does the
“ business which the good old woman
“ herself is unequal to; whose not fre-
“ quent, but somewhat loud and shrill
“ remonstrances to Jenny, when she is
“ careless or neglectful, are the only
“ sounds I ever hear to remind me that
“ there are such things as anger or con-
“ tention in the world. The scene around
“ me is now dreary enough; but in a few
“ weeks spring will produce new plea-
“ sures for me; and I shall hail the first
“ primrose with as much delight as I can
“ feel from any thing, but from that most
“ welcome sight, the face of an old friend.
“ My dear Matilda, you pity, I know, the
“ merely

“ merely negative life I have chosen : en-
“ liven it then sometimes by your kind
“ recollection, and find time now and
“ then to write to me, if it be only to say
“ you are well. Your brother’s marriage
“ may at this period occupy you ; yet I
“ hope you will not even now forget me,
“ nor fail to recollect the tender interest
“ which must ever exist for your happiness,
“ and that of all you love, in the grateful
“ heart of your affectionate

“ CELESTINA DE MORNAY.”

Feb. 7, 17—.

This letter arrived a day after Willoughby's abrupt departure. Between the continual and unceasing hurry in which she lived, and her vexation at that event, she hardly read it, but threw it carelessly by on her toilet, where it remained forgotten like the writer of it.

On the day Willoughby had dined and supped in Grosvenor-street, the whole family had been much dissatisfied with his conduct,

duct, except his uncle; who retaining much of form and ceremony in his own manners, was willing to impute his coldness to respect, and his distant civility to veneration: but the mother and daughter were by no means content with his deportment; and though they concealed their feelings as it were by mutual consent, their pride was equally alarmed, and both resolved to have an early explanation.

Lady Castlenorth, however, whose policy only had power to restrain awhile the ebullitions of her wounded pride, waited one day in hopes that Willoughby would in a family conference testify more ardour for the match than he had done in mixed company; but Willoughby never appeared; and her indignation now knowing no bounds, she ordered her coach, and on the next, stalked with more than usual majesty into the dressing room of Mrs. Molyneux just as she had finished her breakfast, which was, owing to the hour on which she went to bed

bed the preceding morning, even later than usual.

Lady Castlenorth hardly spoke to Mrs. Molyneux when she entered, but demanded in an imperious tone what was become of Mr. Willoughby.

The lady to whom she thus abruptly addressed herself was as haughty and of as high consequence in her own estimation as Lady Castlenorth herself; and feeling and resenting her rude and peremptory style, she answered, with almost as little complaisance in her manner, that she knew not.

" You don't know, Madam!" exclaimed the imperious Viscountess; " you don't know! Very extraordinary surely. What am I to understand from all this?"

" Of that also I am ignorant," replied Mrs. Molyneux. " Mr. Willoughby, Madam, is his own master; and I really can no more account for than direct his actions."

" Astonishing!" re-assumed Lady Castlenorth; " that a man situated as he is,

who is not an absolute ideot, should behave in this manner in an affair on which his very existence as a man of fashion depends: but don't imagine, Mistress Molyneux, that *my daughter*—”

“ Dear Madam,” interrupted Matilda, irritated by the supercilious and insolent tone in which her Ladyship spoke, and particularly the emphasis she put on the word Mistress, “ I beg and entreat that you will spare your anger. I at least cannot deserve it, for I have no influence over my brother. I dare say he has some reasons for having left London so abruptly, though I assure you I do not know them.”

“ You don’t!—I do: he is gone after that creature, whom your mother, to her utter disgrace, brought up in the family, and with whom she suffered her son to live in habits of intimacy which shock me every time I think of it.”

At this moment Mr. Molyneux entered with a letter in his hand, and hardly in his haste noticing Lady Castlenorth, he told

his wife that the letter was that instant delivered to him by an express, that his father was dying, and that they must immediately set out for Ireland at his earnest entreaty. "Hasten therefore," said he, "to prepare yourself, for the chaise I have sent for will be at the door in a moment. Your Ladyship will excuse us I am sure on such an occasion," added he, addressing himself to Lady Castlenorth. "Matilda, we have not a moment to lose: direct your maid to prepare what you want to take with you, and to follow herself with the baggage that may not be so immediately necessary."

"And where is Willoughby?" cried Lady Castlenorth, raising her voice; "I insist upon seeing him."

"I believe he has left London," answered Molyneux; "but I assure you I know not whither he is gone. I dare say your Ladyship will soon hear of him. In the mean time pray pardon me; it is impossible for me now to have the honour of attending you."

He then left the room, as his wife had done already; and Lady Castlenorth, bursting with anger and indignation which she had nobody to listen to, returned in all the fury of mortified pride to her own house.

While she was there meditating how to revenge the neglect shewn to her daughter, of which she now no longer doubted, Willoughby was pouring out all the distresses of his heart to a friend whom heaven seemed to have sent him for their alleviation.

Mr. Vavasour, his most intimate friend, had been absent when he left Cambridge on his hasty and reluctant journey to London, but was now returned, and to him Willoughby immediately disclosed the cause of that uneasiness which his friend perceived he suffered under even before he spoke.

“ What shall I do ?” said he, as he leaned on the table, “ how extricate myself from the most insupportable of engagements? how satisfy this narrow and un-
feeling

feeling Molyneux? my soul revolts from the odious necessity of being obliged to him for forbearance: yet to sell my estates — is more painful to me than any measure but marrying Miss Fitz-Hayman. Yet my promise, my assurances to my mother — I see not how I can escape from the difficulties that encompass me.”

“ You make more of them surely, my dear George,” replied Vavasour, “ than is necessary. What! should either a promise or an exigence compel you to be miserable for life; then indeed there would be no escape: but now, surely, my friend, your escape is not difficult.”

“ Were you situated as I am then, how would you act?”

“ Why I would without hesitation declare off with the woman I did not like, and marry the woman I did: that is, if I were disposed to marry at all.”

“ And would you do this, Vavasour, contrary to a solemn promise given to her who cannot now release me from it? and

then how can I act in regard to Molyneux? be the consequence what it will he shall never again dun me for money, and——”

“Never!” interrupted Vavasour warmly, “if you will listen to me. I am not quite of age it is true, but my fortune is such, that nothing is easier than for me to raise this paltry five thousand pounds, or twice the sum, on no very exorbitant terms. I have already taken up money for my own pleasures, and shall I hesitate when my friend has real occasion for it? In a week’s time the money shall be ready for you. Pray then let us hear no more of any difficulties of that sort, and as for your promise—the good lady, when she extorted it, could never think it binding.”

“ Speak not lightly of her, my dear friend,” cried Willoughby, “ that I may feel all the kindness of the former part of your speech without alloy: she was a woman whom, had you known, you would have reverenced and loved, and it was in

kindness

kindness only that she made me give her an engagement—”

“ To make yourself miserable. I am, you know, George, an Epicurean ; you are somewhat of a Stoic I suppose ; and if that is the case, fulfil your promise, take your heiress, and philosophize at your leisure. I have never seen your Celestina, you know ; but from your description of her, and your long attachment, I should pity you—I am afraid I should despise you—I am sure I should not love you—were you to sacrifice such a creature to any pecuniary considerations. Come, my dear fellow, assure yourself that if five thousand pounds or more will relieve you from what weighs on your spirits about Molyneux’s matter, it is your’s ; the other affair you must settle with your own heart, and I leave you to argue it together.”

Vavasour then quitted the room ; and Willoughby, released from his anxiety about his debt by the generosity of his friend, gave himself up to all those plea-

sant images which presented themselves to his mind. To be united immediately with Celestina, to carry her down to Alvestone, and there to enter on a plan of œconomy which should in a very few years retrieve his circumstances, was a vision which he found so much delight in cherishing, that he drove from his mind as much as possible the painful objections that still cruelly intruded themselves to destroy it: the conversation of Vavasour helped to put them entirely to flight; and Willoughby, persuaded that by the projects of œconomy he had formed he should soon be enabled to pay his friend the money so generously offered him, agreed without much hesitation to accept it. The young men then settled that they would go the next day but one to London, stay there long enough to negociate this busines, and then go down together to Alvestone, from whence Willoughby, who had no inclination to encounter Lady Castlenorth personally, determined to write to his uncle, resigning

all

all pretensions to the honor intended him, and immediately to complete his marriage with her who had so long been mistress of his heart. This arrangement, once made, became every moment more seducing to his imagination ; still the words of his mother, the solemn charge given him with her last breath, returned now and then to disturb his visionary felicity : but Celestina, always so lovely in his eyes, leaning on his arm amid the shades of Alvestone, the delight of all who beheld her, the admiration of his friends, the patroness of his tenants, the protectress of the poor, was an image so deliciously soothing to his fancy, that by indulging it he at length persuaded himself that his mother, who had so very tenderly loved her, would, could she be sensible of all the happiness they should share together, applaud his violation of his promise and sanction his choice.

Vavafour, gay, generous, open hearted, and volatile, always eagerly following him-

self his own inclinations, and as warmly solicitous for his friend's gratification as his own, encouraged as much as possible all tendency in Willoughby to throw off any adherence to what he deemed tyranny beyond the grave; and by the time the negotiation for the loan was completed, which took them up near a week, Willoughby had no longer any scruples remaining. His only business in town then was to pay Molyneux, whose conduct had offended him so much that he had not been to the house: as soon however as the money was ready, he wrote a note to his brother in law, signifying that he would on the next day meet him at his attorney's chambers to settle all accounts between them. The servant who was sent brought the note back; and Willoughby then first learning that his sister and her husband were embarked for Ireland, deposited the money at a banker's, and wrote a cold letter to Molyneux, signifying that it waited his orders. He then gave directions to

his

his own solicitor to take proper receipts on the payment of it, and with Vavasour hastened down to Alvestone, in the neighbourhood of which place he knew Celestina was; but he had determined not to see her till he had obviated every objection she could make to his plan of happiness, by breaking at once and for ever with the Castlenorts; a task on which, resolved as he was to execute it, he could not think without a mixture of concern and apprehension that he was ashamed of feeling, and dared by no means betray to his friend Vavasour; who, without knowing any thing of the Castlenorts himself, had made up his mind that they were an odious and disagreeable set, and from such, whatever might be their rank, he always flew away himself, and encouraged his friends to do it at whatever risk. If he was careless and even rude towards those whom he did not wish to please, he was altogether as amiable and attentive to those to whom he

he sought to be acceptable. His dislikes and his attachments were equally warm, and the latter had hitherto been rather warm than permanent.

C H A P-

CHAPTER XII.

WHILE these things were passing at Cambridge and in London, Celestina underwent the cruellest anxiety at not hearing from Mrs. Molyneux; but all her conjectures ended in the painful conclusion that the preparations and celebration of Willoughby's marriage entirely engaged her, and prevented her writing. All her reason was now summoned to support her against the shock which the certainty of this event would give her. With a beating heart, and in breathless agitation, she ran over the paper which once a week a travelling newsman brought from Exeter, and where she knew the marriage of a man of so much consequence in the neighbourhood would not fail to be inserted.

No

No such intelligence however appeared; and Celestina, imagining that the marriage had notwithstanding certainly taken place, endeavoured, since she could not conquer her regret, to divert it, by trying what she could do towards softening the sorrows and relieving the distresses of the unfortunate Jessy, whose patient endurance of evils, evidently severer than her own, whose fortitude in tearing herself perhaps for ever from the man she loved, and sacrificing the indulgence of her affection to his interest, made Celestina sometimes ashamed of the murmurs she found excited in her heart by less inconveniences, and blush at the reluctance with which she had submitted to the loss of a man, whose regard for her seemed already to have yielded to the influence of pecuniary advantage, and family convenience.

But in despite of every argument she could bring to subdue the pain arising from the recollection of lost happiness, and totally silence the Syren voice of hope which

now

now and then presented the possibility of more favourable days, the uncertainty whether the event to which she laboured to become reconciled had really happened, disturbed and rendered her restless and uneasy. Jeffy, to whom she now sent to desire her company for a little time, joyfully accepted the summons; and in her company Celestina felt great satisfaction, though she had never disclosed to her any part of the sorrow that oppressed her, or given the remotest hint of her attachment to Willoughby. All the indulgence she allowed herself was, that of sometimes chusing to walk towards a knoll at the extremity of the common, which afforded an extensive view towards the west; from thence, by the help of a telescope lent her by her landlord, Celestina had discovered a clump of firs in Alvestone Park; and though they were near ten miles distant, and without a glass appeared only a dark spot above the rest of the landscape, she found a melancholy pleasure in distinguishing

guishing them, and would frequently, as she leant on Jeffy's arm in their pensive rambles, fix her eyes on that distant object, gaze on it steadily for two or three minutes, and then with a deep sigh turn away, and walk silently home.

She encouraged however the artless Jeffy to talk to her of Cathcart; and the poor girl, pleased with every opportunity of repeating his name, and flattered by the tender interest Celestina took in their story, was never weary of speaking of him. She at length acquired confidence enough to produce some of the letters he wrote to her; and Celestina, who had very naturally imputed much of the praise Jeffy had bestowed on his writing and on his style to the fond partiality of her affection for him, was surprised to find in these letters the most manly, clear, and sensible stile she had almost ever met with. The generous emulation which appeared between these lovers, their disinterested tenderness, and the steadiness of their mutual attachment,

ment, raised in Celestina admiration and even respect, and every hour encreased her inclination to contribute to their happiness.

But these intentions she had no way of executing but by means of Willoughby, who was, as she knew from long experience, ever ready to befriend the unfortunate ; and on such an occasion she thought, that as soon as he was married she might, without any impropriety, address herself to him ; and as the farm which old Winstington, the grandfather of Jeffy, possessed, adjoined to his estate at Alvestone, Celestina imagined he could hardly fail of having some influence, which she knew he would be ready to exert for her unfortunate friend.

In meditating how to administer to the afflictions of others, her own sorrows were at least mitigated : but the calm she outwardly assumed was the mere effort of resolution, while her anxiety to hear of Willoughby and of his sister encreased every hour ; and as the delay grew more unaccountable,

countable, it became almost insupportably painful.

It was now the beginning of March: the weather was uncommonly cold and dreary; and a deep snow, which had fallen some days before, had confined Celestina and her companion almost entirely to the house. It was very unusual to see any person pass by the house, near which there was no public road, and the inclemency of the season rendered it still less frequent: Jeffy, therefore, who went to the window by accident to fetch some work that lay there, mentioned to Celestina, as a matter of some surprise, that two foot passengers, who had the appearance of gentlemen, were crossing the common towards the house.

Celestina, who was at that moment meditating, with her eyes fixed on the fire, on the long, long space of time that had elapsed since she had heard of Willoughby, and on all the events that might have taken place in that period, gave very little

attention

attention to this intelligence, and on Jessy's repeating it, answered that probably it was some persons who had lost their way in the snow and were coming to the house for directions to regain the road.

To Jessy, however, the idea of Cathcart was ever present: one of the strangers was not unlike him in figure as she fancied, though both were wrapped in great coats; and the possibility of his having come in search of her, had no sooner struck her, than with eager eyes and a beating heart she watched every step they took: at length they entered the little gate that divided the garden of the house from the common; Jessy was then convinced that neither of them were Cathcart; but her curiosity was strongly excited, and listening to the questions they put to the servant who went to the door, she distinctly heard one of them enquire for Miss de Mornay.

Celestina was now in her turn alarmed; and trembling, though she knew not why, she desired Jessy to go down and ask who it

it was, but before she could be obeyed the door opened, and she saw, with emotions to which language cannot do justice—Willoughby himself!

The first idea that struck her was, that he was come to announce his marriage; and the air of triumph and satisfaction his countenance wore, seemed to tell her he was the happy husband of Miss Fitz-Hayman. Long as she had been accustomed to dwell on this idea, she shrunk with terror from its supposed reality, and pale and trembling drew back, as he eagerly advanced towards her:—“ My heavenly girl! my own Celestina!” cried he as he took her hand. This address, from the married Willoughby, seemed an insult: she withdrew her hand with an air of resentment, would have spoken but could not, and unable to support herself sat down.

Willoughby, whose own anxious emotions had too much prevented his considering how she might be affected by his abrupt appearance, now saw that he had
been

been too precipitate. He placed himself by her, and again taking the hand she had withdrawn, he enquired, with more tenderness and less impetuosity, if she was sorry to see him. Again Celestina would have spoken, but her native pride again refused to assist her; and while she was vainly endeavouring to acquire resolution enough to congratulate him on his supposed marriage, she learned that he had not only broken for ever with Miss Fitz-Hayman, but was come to offer himself to her, who had from his childhood been the sole possessor of his affections.

This sudden and unexpected happiness was too much. Her reason, which in the severest calamity had never quite deserted her, now seemed unequal to tidings so overwhelming, and for a moment or two she sat like a statue; till Willoughby, in that well known voice, and with that graceful and manly tenderness which had rendered him ever so dear to her, related all that had passed from the hour of their last

last parting, and the resolution he had adopted of sacrificing that wealth, which could not bestow happiness, to the long and incurable passion he had conceived for an object so deserving, and without whom no advantages of fortune or situation could give his life the smallest value.

Tears of gratitude and affection now fell from the eyes of Celestina; and as he found the tumult of her spirits subside, he went on to relate to her, with the most generous delicacy, the plans he had formed for their future life, and the means by which he hoped to retrieve his affairs, without sacrificing his happiness. Tenderly however as he touched on these subjects, his violated promise to his mother returned with all it's force to the recollection of Celestina. Willoughby, whose eyes were fixed on her's, saw the painful idea by their expression as soon as it arose, and in a voice that trembled from emotions he could not repress, he endeavoured to obviate the objections he feared she was about

about to make, even before she could utter them.

All his eloquence, however, could not silence that monitor in the breast of Celestina, which told her that there was more of sophistry than of sound reason in his arguments; but fondly attached to him as she was, it was sophistry too enchanting for her to have courage to attempt detecting it. She wished to be convinced Willoughby was right; to see him happy had almost from her earliest recollection been the second wish of her heart; for perhaps to have the power of making him so had always, even unknown to herself, been the first: that happiness seemed now to depend upon her; and she determined (after one of those short struggles, in which, when inclination and duty contend, the former has too often the advantage,) to stifle within her own bosom every painful remembrance, to think as he thought, and in rendering happy the son of her benefactress, to acquit herself through

through her future life of the debt of gratitude she owed her.

Celestina, therefore, made no objection to the proposals Willoughby laid before her, which were, that they should be married privately in about ten days, and take up their abode at Alvestone in the same stile they meant always to reside in. These preliminaries being arranged, Willoughby besought her to permit him to introduce Vavasour to her, who had been waiting below; he went down himself to bring up his friend; and Celestina, in the moment of his absence, endeavoured to recall her presence of mind, and habituate herself to think with less agitation on the happiness of being the wife of her beloved Willoughby.

Vavasour, from the ardour with which his friend had spoken of her personal perfections, was prepared to find her very lovely; and Willoughby on their first interview watched his looks, trying to discover if his expectations had been answered:

swered : they were compleatly so : the agitation she had suffered had raised the glow of her cheeks, and given more softness to her eyes, in which the tears yet trembled ; while the natural dignity of her manner received in his opinion new charms from the remains of embarrassment which she endeavoured to shake off, and in which, after a few moments, she succeeded so well, that they all became as much at their ease as if they had all been as long acquainted as Willoughby and Celestina.

Jeffy, who had left the room on Willoughby's first entrance, was now desired by Celestina to return. During her short absence, while she prepared a repast of cold meat for the hungry travellers who had walked from Alvestone, Celestina related to them as much of her history as interested both of them in her favour ; and Willoughby, who found in every sentiment and every action of Celestina something to encrease his tenderness and admiration, was charmed with the generous pity she

had shewn to her humble friend, and promised her all his influence to obtain for her the provision she had a right to expect from her grandfather, and unite her to her deserving lover.

Willoughby hung with fondness approaching to adoration on every word Celestina uttered, and forgot, that for this time the delight of seeing her must be short; Vavasour, gay, volatile, and enjoying with extreme good humour the happiness of his friend, was little accustomed to think at all; and Jeffy was in too humble a situation to offer her opinion: on Celestina only, therefore, the prudence of the whole party depended; and as the snow was very deep, and they had between eight and nine miles to Alvestone, she at last ventured to hint that it was time they should go.

To Willoughby, the necessity of quitting her had never occurred, and he now heard of it as a sentence of banishment; but Celestina repeating that she should be very uneasy if in such weather they delayed so

long

long a walk to a late hour in the evening, he saw that he should make her really uncomfortable by his stay ; and having obtained leave to see her the next day, and every day till they were to part no more, he at last consented to go, that he and his companion might reach Alvestone before the night fell.

When he released the hand of Celestina, which he kissed a thousand times as he bade her adieu, she turned towards the window, and her eyes followed him across the heath till the furze and thorns at a distance concealed him from her sight. The very traces of his footsteps in the snow were dear to her ; and in that frame of mind which renders it hardly conscious of it's own sensations, she still gazed on *them* when she could distinguish *him* no longer. Jeffy, though she could easily account for her silence, became after some time uneasy, and speaking to her, roused her from her reverie : she then sat down in her usual place, and attempted

to quiet the perturbation of her mind by re-assuming her usual occupations; but the sudden transition within the last three hours, from lifeless despondence to a prospect of the utmost felicity she had ever imagined, was too violent to suffer her spirits to return to their usual calm. The recollection of her deceased benefactress, and of the fatal promise Willoughby had given her, recurred in despite of her endeavours to escape from it: and though, resolute as he appeared to be, to reconcile himself to its violation, there was nobody who had power by their interference to prevent the execution of the determination he had made; though nothing was likely to prevent the marriage on which he had resolved upon; yet the mind of Celestina remained impressed with a confused sensation rather than any distinct prospect of the happiness she had been offered; and the transactions of the day appeared like a dream, from which she feared, by examining it's reality, to be awakened.

C H A P-

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEITHER the person or the mind of Celestina were of that sort which make the strongest impression on the first view; and interesting as her figure and face were, it was the grace as well as the symmetry of the former, and the expression rather than the beauty of the latter that made her altogether so enchanting. Willoughby and Vavasour were now with her every day; and while her lover found in every hour of those days more reason to congratulate himself on the choice he had made, his friend grew insensibly so interested for Celestina, that volatile and unsteady as he had been till then, he found, that though, considering her already as Willoughby's wife, he could form neither hopes or de-

signs for himself, yet that her happiness was the first wish of his heart; and that without violating his warm friendship towards his friend, he, for the first time in his life, envied a man who was going to be married.

The present happiness of Willoughby could be exceeded in his idea only by that which he imagined he had secured to himself by having determined to live only for the happiness of Celestina; and in continually contemplating her perfections, he endeavoured to justify to himself the measures he had taken, and to dismiss from his mind the unpleasing circumstances which might have robbed him of her for ever. He had written, after many attempts, to Lord Castlenorth, declining to carry any farther a negociation in which his inclinations had never any share; and though he softened this mortifying information as well as he could, he was sensible of the bitterness and resentment it must create, and indeed was so little satisfied himself

with

with his performance, that after the fifth or sixth attempt, he would still have delayed or wholly have evaded sending the letter, if Vavasour had not with many arguments and much difficulty persuaded him, that, resolved as he was to break with the family, any letter he could write in explanation, would be less offensive than total silence.

Celestina was very solicitous to know how he had acquitted himself towards his uncle; yet, as he seemed sedulously to avoid the subject, she feared to give him pain by recurring to it, and yielded perhaps too easily to the artifices she saw he used to draw her thoughts from it: while he, studying every turn of her speaking face, often saw, by the pensive cast it assumed, uneasy thoughts arise in her mind; and on those occasions, exerting himself to dispel them, he delighted to recall their sparkling vivacity to her eyes:

“ E’l lampeggiar dell’ angelico riso,”*

L 4

which

* PETRARCH. The lightning of the angelic smile.

which never bestowed greater charms on any countenance than on that of Celestina.

It was now decided that as soon as the settlements were finished, which Willoughby had directed rather according to his love than to his fortune, and which were likely to take up about three weeks, Celestina was to become mistress of Alvestone. He had promised her to forbear making about that delightful place any of the alterations he meditated, till his income was so far retrieved as to allow him to do it with prudence, but he had a thousand reasons ready why Celestina should go there every day; for to reside there entirely, till she was married, she had refused with such firmness as left Willoughby nothing to urge with any chance of success. Partial as himself to this spot, where she had passed the happiest hours of her life, she yet, in her present situation, felt distressed and uneasy at the thoughts of visiting it; but Willoughby pressed it with so much earnestness, that, as the weather was now fine,

fine, and she had defended herself as long as she could, she at length, on condition of having Jeffy with her, agreed to go there for a whole day, and that Willoughby should fetch them both in his phaeton. *C'est le premier pas qui coutume*, says a French proverb; and he longed to have this day over, knowing that the memorials of his mother, which Celestina would there meet with, and which he feared would give her some uneasy sensations, would, after she was accustomed to see them, lose their effect on her mind, and that she would insensibly learn to behold them rather with agreeable than uneasy sentiments.

He persuaded himself that such a revolution had been effected in his own mind, and that notwithstanding his clear recollection of certain forcible words his mother had used in their last melancholy interview, he was, in making himself happy, doing that, which, if she had yet any know-

ledge of human events, she would most warmly approve.

Intoxicated with his passion, which reason and taste seemed so entirely to justify, and an extorted promise only to oppose, Willoughby no longer suffered any uneasy recollections to cast a shade over the bright prospect opening before him. He now saw Celestina, the woman he had from his infancy adored, in that spot where his local affections were so fondly settled. Nothing seemed likely to impede his passing with her there a life of uninterrupted felicity; and till their union could take place, his greatest anxiety was to detach her imagination from all those objections which might yet linger in her mind, and to confirm her in the persuasion that to constitute through her future life the happiness of the son of her benefactress, would be her best acquittal of those obligations she owed to her in the early part of it.

Instead, therefore, of suffering her to visit immediately the particular parts of the

the house which he knew would most forcibly recall ideas which might distress her, he desired Vavasour to attend on Jessy, and follow them into the garden, where, when they were at a little distance, he related to Celestina the measures he had already taken to restore or rather to introduce her amiable and injured friend to the favour of her grandfather. Celestina warmly approved his proceedings, and gratefully acknowledged his kindness, while the hope of seeing Jessy rescued from the severe hardships to which she must otherwise be exposed, and rewarding the disinterested attachment of her deserving lover, was most grateful to her generous heart. Willoughby himself never seemed so perfect as when thus employing his time and his power in the service of the unhappy. The fine scenery around her never appeared to such advantage as now, when she leaned on one arm while with the other he pointed out to her its various beauties; and at this moment the very

season

season seemed to add something to her felicity. Within a few days the whole face of nature was changed: the snow, which had covered every object with cold uniformity, had now given place to the bright verdure of infant spring; the earliest trees and those in the most sheltered situations had put forth their tender buds; the copses were strewn with primroses and March violets, and the garden glowing with the first flowers of the year; while instead of the usually rude winds of the season, those gales only blew which

“ Call forth the long expecting flowers
“ And wake the purple year!”

Myriads of birds, who found food and shelter amid the shrubberies and wood-walks, seemed to hail with songs their future lovely protectress,

“ Hopp’d in her walks and gambol’d in her eyes:”

and while every thing was thus gay and cheerful

cheerful without, the house, when she entered it, shewed her only contented faces: the old servants, it's ancient and faithful inhabitants, had known and loved her from her earliest childhood, and rejoiced in the hope of ending their days in her service; the tenants, who loved their young landlord, were glad to find, that instead of carrying his rents to London he was coming to settle among them; and the poor, who had now for some time severely missed the bounty which had marked Mrs. Willoughby's annual residence among them, invoked blessings on her son, from whom they were assured of more constant consideration, from his own noble nature as well as from the influence of Celestina, who, as they well remembered, was formerly the successful mediatrix between them and their deceased mistress, when her own daughter had frequently heard their petitions with indifference, or avoided them with disgust.

In

In a few days after this first visit to Alvestone, a fortunate circumstance occurred to facilitate the good offices Willoughby had undertaken in favour of Jeffy Woodburn. The old female relation who had acquired unbounded influence over her grandfather died suddenly; and the old man, thus restored to the little power of reflection his very advanced age left him, and alarmed by the death of a person younger than himself, no longer refused to listen to the remonstrances of a clergyman in the neighbourhood, who had by Willoughby been engaged to speak to him in favour of his daughter's child. He consented to see her, provided no attempt was made to introduce her father to him, towards whom neither time, age, or sickness, had blunted the asperity of his hatred; but though these odious passions retained, from habitual indulgence, all their inveterate malignity, the softer feelings of natural affection were dead in him; and rather yielding to importunity than prompted by

By inclination, he consented to receive his granddaughter to officiate about him as a servant, and stipulated that during his life she should be no expence to him; thus grasping to the last moment of his existence, that which he had never enjoyed, and could no longer want. As he had nobody he valued more, he consented however, after many persuasions, to make a will, by which he gave her every thing, on the express condition, to use his own phrase, that her father " might never be the better for it."

It was necessary, though this important point was carried, that Jeffy should, by residing with him, preclude the possibility of being again superceded by some of those mercenary beings who are in all ranks of life ready to surround the couch of the dying miser: a necessity Celestina admitted with reluctance, and Jeffy with tears and regret; but they were both consoled by the reflection that a very short time must in some degree re-unite them

them by the removal of Celestina to Alvestone, which was within a walk of the farm at which her friend was now to reside.

Willoughby, having thus far succeeded for the interesting protégée of Celestina, determined to complete his generous work by attending to the situation of Cathcart. He knew nothing could more highly oblige *her*, to contribute to whose slightest satisfaction was the supreme pleasure of his life; and his own good heart prompted him to lose no time in relieving the unmerited distresses of a deserving young man: he wrote, therefore, (without communicating what he had done) to Cathcart, enclosed him a bank note for his expences; and informing him of all that passed in regard to Jeffy, desired that he would relinquish his place with the attorney, and come down to Alvestone, where Willoughby meant that the same day which gave him Celestina should unite Cathcart to her humble friend.

The

The joy this unexpected turn of fortune gave to Cathcart can better be imagined than described. That sickness of the soul, which long despondence and anxiety had produced, vanished at once: his immediate care was to secure his sister's and her children's support during his absence; and reserving to himself no more of Willoughby's generous present than sufficed for the expences of his journey, he took a tender leave of Mrs. Elphinstone, assuring her that the first use he would make of his good fortune should be to assist her; he then set out on a hired horse for Alvestone, where he arrived ten days before that which was fixed upon for his patron's happiness and his own.

If Willoughby had been greatly interested for him before he saw him, he was much more so now that he found him very intelligent and well informed, with abilities that might have made his way to any situation of life, and a heart that would have done honour to the most exalted; his

His knowledge, which was very extensive, was without pedantry, and his gratitude without servility. The meeting between him and Jeffy, at which Willoughby contrived that Celestina should be present, was very affecting ; and after the first transports of happiness so unexpected had a little subsided, Willoughby explained to them his views for the future. " You, my dear Jeffy," said he, " must not think of leaving your grandfather, who must know nothing of your marriage while he lives, which can, according to the course of nature, be only a very little time ; and as you may see each other every day, this partial separation may for that little time be easily borne. As for you, Cathcart, you will stay with me : I have, in consequence of my new plan of life, many regulations to make, and many accounts to settle, in which you can be of great use to me. Poor Beechcroft, my old steward, is in his eightieth year, and the palsy has lately made such ravages in his intellects,

lects, that he is unequal to the common business of his office; while he lives however, and thinks himself capable of executing his trust, I am very unwilling to mortify him by taking the affairs out of his hands: at his death I shall not replace him, but become my own steward; and you, my good friend, can be of the most effectual service to me in preparing every thing for this arrangement: while your neighbourhood to the estate of which you will probably soon become master, will give you an opportunity of inspecting it, and settling those plans for the future which will I hope and believe make you a very fortunate man."

While the considerate kindness of Wiloughby endeared him every hour to Celestina, and while the hearts of Cathcart and Jessy overflowed with gratitude, it would have been hardly possible for a happier party to have been any where found than that which now occasionally inhabited Alvestone; if the painful recollection
of

of Willoughby's violated promise could have been entirely expelled from the conscious recollection of Celestina, and if Vavasour had not sometimes felt towards Celestina something bordering on serious love, which was a sentiment so new to him, who had never thought with respectful affection of any woman before, and had passed too much of his time in scenes of fashionable debauchery, that he hardly knew himself what it meant. He formed however no designs, for his temper was generous, candid, and artless; so artless indeed that he took no pains to conceal what he felt almost without understanding his feelings; and frequently fixed his eyes on Celestina with so impassioned a look, or spoke to her, or of her, with such unreserved marks of fondness and admiration, that Jeffy and Cathcart both saw it with some alarm; but Willoughby, too liberal for jealousy, and knowing his friend more inclined to general libertinism among the looser part of the sex than capable of a particular

• particular attachment to any woman of character; sure of Celestina's affection, and imputing all Vavasour's attentions to his admiration of beauty wherever found, either noticed not his manner, or held them to be wholly without consequence; while Celestina, perfectly unconscious of the power of her own charms, treated him with that affectionate familiarity which his own open and lively manners encouraged, and which his friendship for Willoughby, and the obligations they both owed to him, justified.

Only three days were now to intervene before that fixed for the double wedding, which was to be celebrated in the parish church at Alvestone, in the presence only of two trusty servants, and Vavasour, who was to act as father to both the brides.

Very different prospects of life from those which now were before Willoughby and Celestina, had opened to Mr. and Mrs. Molyneux, who, on their arrival in Ireland, had found Sir Oswald Molyneux

just

just alive: he lingered unexpectedly a few weeks after their arrival, and then died, leaving to his son an immense fortune, of which Sir Philip hastened to take possession, and to display, as soon as decency permitted, his wealth and his interest; while Matilda, now Lady Molyneux, lost no opportunity of availing herself of the *eclat* which almost boundless fortune gave to novelty. Nobody was so much followed and admired; no taste was so universally adopted, no parties so splendidly attended, as her's; and having thus attained the summit of what she fancied happiness, she was in no haste to return to England till she had exhausted the felicity Ireland offered her, and cheerfully acquiesced in her husband's proposal of staying one summer at their magnificent seat about twenty miles from Dublin. In the mean time she had heard from her brother, whose resentment towards her husband did not extend to her, of his having broke with the Castlenorts, and his intentions,

tions in regard to Celestina. She disliked both Lady Castlenorth and her daughter, and therefore was pleased with their mortification and disappointment : she had now no pecuniary claims on her brother, and heard therefore with indifference his resolution to marry a woman without fortune ; and as to Celestina, though she was incapable of any affection for her, yet she thought she would make a good quiet wife for her brother, and be well adapted to that insipid domestic life, his turn for which she had always pitied and despised. As Willoughby's just resentment against Sir Philip had never given her any concern, she gave herself no trouble to remove it ; and Sir Philip himself, above all attention for the feelings of others, and too much a man of the very first fashion to understand the claims of relationship, or to feel those of friendship, was as unconcerned as if no such resentment had ever been deserved ; and while they both enjoyed their newly acquired consequence in Ireland, Wil-

loughby was suffered to proceed his own way at Alvestone without remonstrance and almost without notice.

But neither the neglect of his sister, or the sullen resentment of his uncle and Lady Castlenorth, from whom he heard nothing, now gave Willoughby any concern : his happiness it was out of their power to disturb or prevent, since one day only intervened before he was to be the husband of Celestina.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XIV.

AVASOUR, born to a splendid fortune, and left by the early death of his parents to the care of guardians, who, while they took sufficient care of his property, had very little influence over his mind and his morals, had never yet formed a wish which it was not immediately in his power to gratify : the growing inclination, therefore, that he found towards Celestina, was painful and uneasy to him, for he had too much honour, and too true a regard for Willoughby, to suffer a thought injurious to him to dwell on his mind ; and had he been capable of entertaining wishes or forming schemes against his happiness, he knew that Celestina's attachment to him was not to be shaken, and that he should

excite her contempt and abhorrence instead of continuing to enjoy that confidence and regard with which she now favoured him.

But the more hopeless his partiality for her was, the more restless he of course became in it's encrease: for several days he endeavoured to conquer or at least to conceal it by redoubling his gaiety: he romped, laughed, and rattled, till his violent spirits became even distressing to Celestina: all however would not do; and as he had no notion of enduring any kind of uneasiness while there was a chance of relieving himself, he at length resolved to quit Willoughby, and not to return to him till after he was actually married; and this resolution he prepared to execute the following morning, which was the preceding one to that which was fixed for the marriage.

"I shall leave you this morning, George," said he to Willoughby, as they were at breakfast together.

242

243

"Leave

"Leave me!" cried Willoughby in much surprise; "for what reason?"

"Because I hate all formal ceremonies, and have besides business elsewhere."

"Ridiculous! surely you are not in earnest?"

"Perfectly so, believe me: never more in earnest in my life. I'll come back to you in a week or ten days, but I positively go this very day."

"Thou art a strange fellow, and there is never any telling where to have thee. Did you not promise to be father to the brides? What will Celestina say?"

"Why probably as you do—that I am a strange fellow."

"You make me uneasy, Harry," said Willoughby very gravely. "Whimsical and unsettled as you are, it must be surely something more than mere whim which urges you to leave me at such a time."

"Not at all," answered he gaily: "it is the time in the world you can best spare me; and upon my soul I have business

to do which I have foolishly neglected, and which I must either go after now or a fortnight hence, when I intend to be with you; and so, my dear George, we'll talk no more about it: my servants are getting ready, and will be at the door in a minute: oh they are driving round. Well, George, God bless you, my dear fellow. Give my love to the girls, and tell Celestina to save me a great piece of bride cake."

Willoughby would again have remonstrated, but Vavasour, in his wild way, ran on rallying him about his marriage, and refusing to listen to him, till the curriicle was ready; into which he stepped, after again promising to return in a fortnight, and immediately drove away.

Willoughby, though long accustomed to these starts of caprice from his thoughtless friend, was equally surprised and disconcerted at a resolution for which he could not account: he was far from the remotest idea of the real cause; and, occupied as his thoughts were by Celestina, he investi-

gated not so deeply the motives of his friend's actions as at another time he might have done.

On the preceding day, moved by his tender reproaches that she had no confidence in his honour, and affected needless precaution, Celestina had acceded to his wishes that she would allow him, as the day was fixed for Thursday, to fetch her to Alvestone in the morning of Wednesday, where Jeffy was to meet her, and that she would then take her last leave of her humble abode on Thorpe Common.

As soon, therefore, as Vavasour was gone; he dispatched Cathcart for Jeffy, and hastened himself to Celestina, who was ready for him. As they journeyed towards the house that was henceforth to be their home, Willoughby, with more than usual tenderness in his voice and manner, entered into a more minute detail than he had ever yet done of the plans he had formed for their future life: with the sanguine hand of youthful hope, he drew a

picture of uninterrupted felicity, which Celestina, involuntarily sighing, thought too perfect to be realized; and with timid apprehension, for which she could not account and was unwilling to betray, she internally asked herself wherefore she could expect to deserve or enjoy blessings so much superior to the common lot of humanity.

All, however, that might have been to another an alloy to happiness, was none to her, so far as it related only to herself. In marrying her, Willoughby had resigned all prospect of ever restoring his family to the splendid fortune and high consequence possessed by his ancestors, nor could he even retrieve the estate he had left, or keep up the place he was so fond of, but by relinquishing all superfluous expences, and confining himself to that mode of life, which was some years since adopted, but would now be thought below the pretensions of a man possessed only of a thousand a year: in fact Willoughby found, on a

close inspection of his affairs, that by living within that income, he might in about ten years clear, without dismembering his estate. "It is enough for happiness, my Celestina," he would say; "it is enough to afford us all the decencies, and all the comforts of life, and to assist those who may not have either. Oh how little reason we shall have to envy those who have more," Celestina assented with her whole heart; and if ever an uneasy reflection arose there for a moment, representing that for her he resigned the splendour and luxury in which he might have lived, she recollected her opinion of the greater part of those who moved amid a succession of those luxuries, and asked herself whether there was one among them who was so much respected by others, or so well content with himself, as Willoughby would probably be, living as he proposed. She remembered how often, when she was accustomed to see nearly many of those, who, by adventitious advantages, dazzle at a distance,

distance, she had been compelled to assent to the truth of that severe expression of the satirist's, which says, that it may be seen—

“ Of how small estimation is exorbitant wealth
“ In the sight of God,
“ By his bestowing it on the most unworthy
“ Of all mortals.”

The departure of Vavasour, of which Willoughby had, with some marks of regret and surprise, on his first meeting Celestina informed her, had given her concern, as it seemed to have been a disappointment to him; but for herself, she felt rather relieved by the absence of a too lively guest. There was at times an unguarded vivacity about him, of which she was not always able to check the excess; and though she had never any idea of his partiality to her, nor thought him capable of a serious attachment to any woman, there had of late been a warmth and earnestness in his manner which she was

afraid

afraid of being called prudish if she attempted to repress, and yet she could not but feel that it was improper to allow it in her present situation, and would be more so when she became the wife of Willoughby. On their arrival at Alvestone, the lawyer was ready with the settlements: they were immediately executed in the presence of Cathcart and Jeffy; and when that unpleasant ceremony was over, a walk filled up the time till dinner. Nothing was ever so gay and happy as Willoughby: Celestina was now mistress of his house: his happiness was secured almost beyond the reach of fate: and since only a few hours were to intervene before their marriage, he tenderly chid Celestina for her pensive gravity, and endeavoured to engage her thoughts by necessary arrangements that he proposed in the house, and by enlarging on those topics which she had listened to with so much complacency in the morning.

After

After dinner another walk was proposed; but just as they were rising from table, a servant entered with a letter for Willoughby, which he said had been brought express from Exeter.

He broke the seal, which, like the hand of the direction, was unknown to him; he ran over the contents hastily, changing countenance as he read; and then enquiring if the messenger waited, hastily left the room.

Celestina, who watched his looks, was alarmed both by them, and his manner of leaving the room. A moment's reflection, subdued her apprehensions; but they were presently renewed and heightened by his sending to speak with Cathcart; who, after being with him almost a quarter of an hour, returned by his directions to inform her, that he was gone on horseback to Exeter to meet some people who had sent to him about business which would admit of no delay: he begged Cathcart to tell her that it would be soon dispatched, and that

that he should certainly return in a few hours.

Celestina knew, from his own account, every circumstance of his fortune; she knew that except the mortgages on his estate, the interest of which had been punctually paid, he had no pecuniary claims to answer but his debt to Vavasour: she was equally certain that he had no dispute with any body, and that therefore it could not be an affair of honour, and she thought it certain that if Lady Molyneux or any of his relations had been in the neighbourhood, he would have made no mystery of their arrival: his abrupt departure, therefore, without seeing her, surprised and troubled her; and neither her own reason, which urged how unlikely it was that any disagreeable business should detain him, or the arguments of Cathcart and Jeffy, could quiet or mitigate the anxiety which every moment of his absence increased.

Four,

Four, five, six hours, had now been passed by Celestina, while it was light, in traversing the avenue and the road that led towards Exeter; and after it became dark, in listening at the door to every noise. It was ten o'clock: a still, star-light night: a low wind conveyed now the distant murmur of the water-fall in the park, now the voices of men from the village, where every thing soon sunk into repose. Neither Cathcart nor Jeffy could longer disguise their fears, though neither knew what to dread; but while they affected to believe Celestina's apprehensions in great measure groundless, their anxious returns to the door to listen, their restless inquietude, and various conjectures, convinced her too evidently that they participated the fears they pretended to condemn.

At length about eleven o'clock, a horse, or as they were willing to believe, horses, were heard to come fast along the road: the park gate opened and shut with violence. It was Willoughby they all fondly hoped:

hoped: all ran out eagerly, impatient to meet him: as the horseman approached, however, they distinguished him to be not Willoughby, but the servant who had attended him.

"Where is your Master, Hugh?" said Celestina; "is he coming? is he well?"

The man took a letter from his pocket, and answered in a dejected tone—"No, Madam, not coming: he sent me with this letter to Mr. Cathcart."

Celestina followed trembling, while Cathcart ran into the hall, and by the light which hung there, read these words:

"Dear Cathcart, come to me immediately. I shall not return to-night. I know not if— But assure Celestina of my safety. Lose not a moment in coming to

"your's ever,

*Swan, Exeter,
Wednesday night.*

"G. W."

The

The painful suspense Celestina had before endured, was happiness and ease in comparison of the vague but terrible apprehensions that now seized her. What could detain him against his wishes? what meant the unfinished sentence—"I know not if——?" what could he want with Cathcart? and why not disclose the cause of his stay, and his business with Cathcart, if it was only an affair of little consequence, since he could not but know how much his sudden departure must alarm her. The note too seemed to have been written with a trembling hand; the lines were crooked, and the letters hardly formed, and the paper blotted: all denoted hurry and confusion, very unlike Willoughby's manner in matters of mere business; and the indications of some impending evil, alarming enough in themselves, were exaggerated by the terrors which had now taken entire possession of the mind of Celestina. Unable to restrain her emotions, she ran, hardly knowing whither

whither she went, to the stable, where the servant who had brought the note was getting ready the horse on which Cathcart was to go. She eagerly questioned the man who was with his master? He answered that he did not know: that he saw nobody with him, but he had heard at the inn that two ladies had come thither that morning, who had sent the messenger to Alvestone; that he believed they had been with his master, but he did not know, and when his master spoke to him, and gave him the letter for Mr. Cathcart, he was alone, and seemed very uneasy, saying however little more to him than to desire he would make what haste he could.

This account served only to encrease the terrible obscurity which tormented Celestina. A thousand other questions occurred. Were these ladies yet at the inn? Did they travel in their own chaise? Had they servants with them? Hugh could not answer the first question; but the other two being such as lay more within the reach

reach of his observation, he answered that there were certainly neither servants nor horses at the inn belonging to any stranger when he came away.

Cathcart was by this time ready; and seeing the extreme inquietude of Celestina, he assumed the appearance of tranquillity he was far from feeling, said that it was probably some business relative to Mr. Willoughby's estates, which had been overlooked and neglected; that at all events he would be back in a few hours, when it was almost certain that if Mr. Willoughby did not return himself, he should be commissioned fully to acquaint her of the reasons of his detention, and convince her that her fears for his safety were groundless: in the mean time he besought her to endeavour to quiet her spirits and to take some repose. Cathcart then departed; and Celestina, leaning on the arm of Jessy, returned to the house; but to follow the advice he had given her, was not in her power; the little she had

had gathered from the servant served to awaken new alarms, not less painful, though very different from those which had at first assailed her: then she had a confused idea that the abrupt departure of Vavasour had been occasioned by some misunderstanding between them, which had produced a challenge; it was unlikely, but it was not impossible: now she gave up that conjecture for another, and supposed that Wiloughby might have formed some connection or engagement with some woman, who, hearing of his intended marriage, had thus prevented it by urging her prior claim to his hand: this supposition was, however, more improbable than the other, from his known integrity and unblemished honour, from his long and tender attachment to her, and from the whole tenor of his morals and his conduct; but however unlikely, it was not quite impossible; and the anxious and alarmed spirit of Celestina ran over the remotest possibilities, but found in all only exchange of anguish.

As

As Cathcart had promised to return in a few hours, Celestina, certain of not being able to sleep, would not go to bed; and Jessy, who shared all her solicitude, sat up with her. As the time approached that Cathcart had named for the probable period of his return, they were again both at the window, and again eagerly listening to every noise. The sun arose, but discovered not the objects of their solicitude; and Celestina, now unable to rest within the house, besought Jessy to go down with her to the end of the long avenue of elms and into the road, as if the attempt to meet those they expected rendered the suspense less distracting.

Weary of conjecture, and fatigued both in mind and body, they moved slowly and melancholy along: neither of them spoke, for neither had any comfort to offer the other. Of the labourers, who were come by this time to their work, they enquired if they had heard of their master, or seen Mr. Cathcart on the road. But no intelligence.

gence could be gained of either. The peasants, however, alarmed by the questions and by the looks of those who asked them, all eagerly offered to go any where, to do any thing their master's service might require, and begged Celestina to employ them: but though she had several times, during the long and anxious night, thought of sending a messenger with a letter to Willoughby, or even of going herself, she now remembered that all the intelligence she could gain from the first expedient, she would probably receive from Cathcart before any messenger could get to Exeter; and for the second, that it might be displeasing to Willoughby, were she to appear thus prying into his actions and mistrustful of his honour.

Nothing, therefore, remained but to bear, with what firmness she could, suspense which every moment rendered more insupportably cruel. Hardly conscious of what she was doing, and insensible of personal fatigue, she had advanced near a

mile

mile beyond the park, and had partly crossed a sandy heath, over which the high road lay, when Jeffy hastily cried out that Cathcart was coming: he saw them at the same moment; and hastening on, leaped from his horse as soon as he came near them.

His countenance was little likely to quiet their fears: he was as pale as death, and his lips trembled as he spoke to Celestina, and assured her, in a voice that seemed to contradict the words it hardly articulated, that Mr. Willoughby was well, perfectly well, and had authorised him to say every thing to her that might make her easy.

The hurried manner in which he spoke this, the impression of uneasiness on his countenance, and the improbability that Willoughby should be well and not return himself, all struck forcibly on the mind of Celestina, and convinced her that something very fatal had happened. "You deceive me, Cathcart," cried she in the

wild

wild and tremulous voice of despair, “ I know you deceive me. Something very dreadful has befallen him : he is dead, or dying : I will go to him, however—I will know the worst.”

Cathcart now took her hands, and with the utmost earnestness began again to repeat his assurances that Willoughby was not only alive but well. Celestina, interrupting him, asked—“ Why then do I not see him? why is he detained? and what business of fatal import could keep him so long? Cathcart, I will not, I cannot be deceived : tell me at once what I have to suffer, and I will endeavour to bear it ; but this incertitude, these apprehensions, I cannot endure another hour, nor another moment.

While this dialogue passed, he had taken one of her arms within his, and having made a sign to Jefsy to take the other, they led her gently towards Alvestone park gate. Cathcart was silent for a moment, as if considering how he could soften the shock

thock which it was necessary for him to give her; while Celestina continued impatiently urging him to tell her the worst, whatever it might be. "Let me repeat to you, dearest Madam," said he, "let me repeat to you, that you have nothing to fear for the life of our dear friend; and surely whatever other intelligence I have to impart—"

"Other intelligence!" cried Celestina: "you have then something to impart which all my fortitude is required to sustain. Willoughby—but no! it is impossible: he cannot be unworthy—he cannot have cruelly deceived me—it is impossible—"

"It is indeed," replied Cathcart, "in my opinion impossible for Mr. Willoughby to be guilty of any unworthy action. You, Miss de Mornay, have, I am convinced, a strength of understanding very uncommon—"

"Cathcart," cried Celestina with energy, "this is no time for flattery: prove your

opinion

opinion of my understanding by daring to entrust me with this fearful secret: the knowledge of it cannot give me so much pain as your hesitation."

" I would very fain obey you!" replied he. " What then will you say if I tell you, that, though I am wholly ignorant of the cause of a resolution so extraordinary, so unexpected, I am afraid it will be very long before you see Willoughby again, and that he is now many miles distant from us; though upon my soul, by all my hopes here and hereafter, I swear that I neither know the motives of his departure nor whither he is gone."

Celestina, prepared as she was for some heavy blow, found this hideous uncertainty more than she could sustain: that Willoughby should have quitted her, probably for ever, without assigning any cause, at the very moment they were to be united; that he should not himself have seen her to have softened the pain this cruel and unaccountable event must in-

flict; that he should not even have written to her, but should, in this abrupt and unfeeling way, abandon her to all the misery of endless conjecture, regret, and disappointment; were circumstances so unexpected, so insupportable, that her reason, which would have sustained her in almost any other exigence, seemed for a moment to yield to this: she became extremely faint, her knees trembled, a cold dew hung on her forehead, and all the effort she could make was, to signify by a motion of her hand that she could go no farther.

They were then more than half a mile from the park gate: but the road along which they were passing was worn, and a bank on either side offered her a seat. Cathcart and Jessy sat down by her, both silent, and almost as much affected as she was. She leaned her head on Jessy, and after a moment a deep sigh a little relieved her. She turned her eyes mournfully on Cathcart, with an expression he perfectly understood, as seeming to say, tell me all—and I will try to endure it.

“ Do

“ Do not think, I conjure you, my dear Madam,” continued he, “ that the ardent and tender affection of Mr. Willoughby for you is diminished. Were it possible for me to do justice to the agonies I saw him in, when he told me that a strange necessity—a necessity he could not explain—compelled him to quit you ;—if language could describe the wretchedness in which he seemed to be involved——”

“ Do not describe it, dear Cathcart,” said Celestina, speaking with difficulty. “ I can bear my own misery, terrible as it is, better than the thoughts of his.”

“ Mitigate his sufferings then, amiable Miss de Mornay,” interrupted Cathcart, “ by collecting all your fortitude, and remembering how much reliance you ought to have on his honour and his affection ; and let me be able to say, when I write to him, that this sad separation has not injured your health, nor your opinion of him : believe me, such is the only intelligence that can administer any consolation to the torn heart of my noble friend.”

“ I will try then, Cathcart, that he shall have it. You know where to write to him? He expects to hear from you, and from me he wishes not to hear ?”

“ He told me,” reassumed Cathcart, “ that as soon as he was able he would write to you himself: that he was going immediately to London: whither he should go afterwards he knew not; but that a hateful mystery—Then he stopped; seemed to repent having said so much; charged me to assure you of his everlasting affection; started from his seat; walked about the room wildly; then again repeated his charge to me that I would not leave you, or suffer Jessy to leave you, but that you would remain at Alvestone till you heard from him: again he hesitated, doubted, and wringing my hand, asked me, with disturbed looks and in a tremulous voice, if ever wretchedness equalled his. I would have besought him to tell me from whence it arose; but as if foreseeing whither my enquiry would tend, he stopped me: ‘ Cathcart,’ cried he,

“ you

‘ you know I have great confidence in you, and that I would entrust you with this fatal mystery, which I go now to clear up ; but I have sworn never to divulge the cause of my——what can I say ?—Oh ! Celestina ! best and loveliest of human beings ! what must be those sufferings which Willoughby dares not communicate to you !—which your pity and tenderness——’ Again he broke off, and hurried out of the room. He returned, however, in a few moments, somewhat more calm ; and alarmed as I had been by his agitation, by the wild eagerness of his manner, and the incoherence of his words, I thought it better to soothe him than to attempt to obtain an explanation which it cost him so much even to speak of : I contented myself therefore with assuring him of my implicit obedience to all his commands, and of my conviction that whatever might be your distress and anxiety, you would acquiesce in all his wishes, and that your reliance on him, your affection for him, would not be shaken by this

this involuntary separation, which, dear Sir, continued I, will surely be temporary only; I was going on, but he checked me—‘ I know not,’ said he, with quickness—‘ I know not—involuntary, God knows it is, but *when* it will end!—Oh Celestina! is this the day which I have with so much delight anticipated!’ He now struck his open hand on his forehead, again started away from me, and again relapsed into all the agonies of sorrow.”

Celestina had not hitherto shed a tear. Stunned by the greatness and singularity of her misfortune, terrified by the evil, which its obscurity rendered doubly fearful, her senses were for some moments suspended; but Willoughby weeping, and in despair—Willoughby torn from her by an invisible and resistless hand—awakened all her tenderness, and tears filled her eyes, as, with a deep sigh, she cast them towards heaven, and with clasped hands and in a faint voice cried—“ Wherever he goes—whatsoever he does—may God protect and bless him;

and

and if the remembrance of poor Celestina causes him any unhappiness, may he forget her. Indeed, Cathcart," added she, " indeed his happiness, and not my own, has been always the first wish of my heart." She would have gone on, but her voice failed her. After a moment's silence, however, she seemed to have found some degree of fortitude and strength—" Let us return to the house, my dear Jeffy," said she, " while I am able, and let us there consider what it will be right to do."

Cathcart, glad to see her more composed than he had dared to hope, now again led her forward with the assistance of Jeffy. But their help seemed no longer requisite: she hurried on with as much quickness as if she expected her suspense to be terminated on her reaching the house; where she arrived, out of breath, trembling, and agitated. She spoke not, but hurried through the hall into the library, where they usually sat; and there the first object that struck her was Mr. Thorold, the clergy-

man

man who had been engaged to marry them, the same who had, at the request of Willoughby, so effectually exerted his zeal and friendship in introducing Jeffy Woodburn to her grandfather, and of whose society Willoughby was very fond.

He laid down his book on the entrance of Celestina, and prepared to salute her with cheerful congratulations, for it was not now more than eight o'clock; he had put his horse into the stable himself as was his custom, and walked into the library, where he had been some time expecting Willoughby, and began to wonder, as he was a very early riser, at his delay.

All ideas of bridal festivity however were driven from his mind the moment he beheld the countenance of Celestina. "My dear Miss De Mornay," cried he, approaching her, "are you ill?—has any thing happened?" Celestina, struck by the sight of him, could not answer, but sat down in the first chair she found, and Cathcart, seeing how greatly she was affected, took Mr.

Thorold

Thorold by the arm and led him into the garden.

Celestina, in the mean time leaning against Jeffy, who hung weeping over her, attempted again to recover her resolution and composure. She sighed deeply. "Jeffy, my love," said she, when she could command her voice, "I wish to return to Thorpe Heath. Methinks I am now an intruder here: send, therefore, for some conveyance for me; and think for me, my dear friend, for I fear I am incapable of judging for myself."

The timid and soft tempered Jeffy was but little likely to direct or support her. "Let us, dearest Madam," said she, "speak to Cathcart again before you take any resolution: let us hear Mr. Thorold's opinion."

"Do you then attend them for that purpose," replied Celestina, "for myself, I cannot hear them. I should I think be better were I left alone for a few moments: I will go, therefore, to my own room—my own room? alas! I have none in this house!"

Let me go, however, Jessy, to that which I used to call mine. I would recall my dissipated and distracted spirits, I would acquire some degree of reason and resignation; and since wretchedness is now irreversibly mine, I would teach this rebellious heart to submit to it."

Jessy answered not; and Celestina rising, walked slowly through the hall, leaning on her friend's arm, towards the stair case. As she passed, she saw Willoughby's hat and gloves on the table where he generally placed them; a book he had been reading to her, as they sauntered in the garden the preceding day, lay by them: Celestina started as if a spectre had met her: the painful contrast between her present situation and that of a few hours before struck her forcibly: she shuddered, and snatching up the book, hastened away with it, as if she apprehended somebody would take it from her.

When they reached the door of the apartment which she had chosen for her dressing room,

room, she turned to Jeffy, and with a melancholy and forced composure bade her adieu for an hour. " You will go, my dear," said she, " to Mr. Thorold and Mr. Cathcart, and say to the former, with my compliments, that I will endeavour to see him if he will be kind enough to stay till ten o'clock and breakfast here, and tell him too that I depend much on his friendly advice, and that it cannot be given to any being who wants it more or will be more sensible of it's value."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.